

# The Rebel

*H. B. Marriott Watson*

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# The Rebel

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# The Rebel

Being

A Memoir of

Anthony, fourth Earl of Cherwell,

Including an Account of the Rising at Taunton in 1684,

Compiled and set forth by his Cousin,

Sir Hilary Mace, Bart.,

*Custos Rotulorum for the County of Wilts*

Edited, with some Notes, by

H. B. Marriott Watson

Author of "The Princess Xenia," "The Adventurers," etc.



London

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# THE REBEL

## CHAPTER I

OF THE SOURCE OF THIS HISTORY, AND OF MY LORD'S  
UPBRINGING UNTIL THE DUEL WITH SIR JACOB  
JANUS.

THE fourth Earl of Cherwell was born at Dulsiebridge in the year of our Lord 1654, being some six years before the Restauration of his Majesty, King Charles II. The titles of that ancient and considerable family date from the reign of King Edward VI, by whom the Heriots of Heriot Deane were fetched among the peers under the style of the Lords Caversham. The history of that name was, however, of earlier note, for the Heriots were of mark in the county of Hampshire at the time of the Wars of the Roses, and had been settled there from the days of King John. It was not until the accession of King Henry VII, nevertheless, that they began to move among the higher affairs of state, and take their proper place in Courts. Philip Heriot it was that laid the foundations of the title for his descendants, a man, if all be true, and by the testimony of Lord Herbert, of a great capacity, and a most fervid

mind. Indeed the blood of that wayward man bountifully descended to subsequent generations, and I am disposed to find in it the explanation and the plea for the notable career of Anthony, the fourth Earl, who is the subject of this memoir.

My lord Cherwell is long since dead, and he would have been the last to have desired this record of his history through certain remarkable years, yet I am urged to the task in part out of an affection for the man himself, who was indeed cousin-german to me, as well as a fear lest he should leave behind him, current in the traditions of the Court, a bad interpretation of his conduct ; and partly also, out of a sincere respect for the dignity of History, to which properly these episodes belong. The character of King James II has been set high by some writers in these latter years, inspired somewhat by a becoming reverence for the fallen ; but it behoves History to walk more warily, to be as merciless as generous, and above all to regard Truth as at once the aim and source of her existence. These thoughts have animated me for long, and I will confess that from the time I was at the Admiralty Office under their late Majesties, and was, perforce, so much in London, I began to collect the materials of this narrative. As for its accuracy, it will be seen that to a great part of the history I was myself privy, being at that time frequently in my lord's company. And for the rest, I have drawn information from my lord himself, who was at all times frank with his news ; from Dr. Burnet, who saw much that was in progress at the Court, and from a number of other witnesses, chief of whom was the Duke of Tyrconnel, himself the Duke's own creature. But more especially have I used what was known to Ravel, my lord's man,

and some others whom it is not becoming to mention. Thus it will be clear that I have warrants for my story, singular as that is, and that I have in no wise magnified the figure which my lord played ; no, nor the sinister and tragical interposition of his Highness, the Duke.

The origins of that long and varied contest, conducted upon either side with spirit and determination, and upon one, at least, with a ferocious ardour, are found readily in the seed of which the two antagonists sprang. I have spoken of Philip Heriot, and of his elevation to the baronage under the style of Lord Caversham, for some meritorious services in Holland. That lively temper survived and actuated the first Anthony, who was his son, as well as his grandson the first Earl. The second lord laid his head upon the block for Lady Jane Grey, being taken at the head of a troop in Kent, whither he had fled from London to raise the county. But Dick Will o' the Wisp, as he was commonly dubbed, spent his strange forces, doubtless more by chance than of a purpose, in the honourable service of his Queen and country. His courage in the defeat of the Armada, and his reckless extravagance in France, where he dashed his sword hilt in the face of the Spanish ambassador, endeared him to her Majesty and to the people. He was greatly in the favour of the Court, abominably neglected his estates, was created Earl of Cherwell, and only fell out of the Queen's graces through an obstinate defence of Sir Walter Raleigh, and his loud sharp tongue upon the matter. Yet it was not these characteristics alone that were afterwards visible in the temperament of Anthony the fourth Earl. The spirit of that house leaned towards the fanatical. It was of a puritanical cast, and the third Earl, my lord's own father,

was the companion of Hampden and the friend of Sir Harry Vane. He equipped a force for the Parliament, held Stratton Castle for three weeks against Prince Rupert, and accompanied the Protector to Naseby with a ragged following of reckless fellows. That command indeed was remarkable, and I have from witnesses the odd appearance it wore in the centre of those staid and serious Puritans. For my lord had drawn his levies from everywhere, and they were held together by no common aim of policy or religion, but only by an admiration for their master, and a sense of obedience. They were a little band of brigands in the New Model, swore their oaths like any cavalier, braided their locks, thieved, drank, and fought with any. It was a strange sight to see my lord (as Sir William Upton has told me) seated at the head of these swashbucklers, with his cavalier wig red as a berry, his fine coat all splashed and wine-stained, a great sword whipped to his knee, and rolling forth pious texts and persuasions with the most canting Roundhead of them all. It was an incongruous appearance, mighty disconcerting to his friends, and indeed there is no question that he was much abused in consequence. He caused great offence, and was complained of as a stumbling-block. Yet it does not appear that the Protector interfered with him, and I have no doubt that the sincerity of the man was his best excuse. He was a Heriot, and must hold himself like his fathers, as unlike to any ordinary mortal as well might be. Subsequently, he pressed savagely for the trial of the King, and only an accident saved his name from among the regicides. With equal zest and equal fury he quarrelled with Cromwell upon some point of religious tolerance, threw up his offices, and retired in

dudgeon to Hampshire, where he died in 1656, in the thirty-seventh year of his age.

I have here set forth a brief account of Stephen, Lord Cherwell, my lord's father, out of a desire that the temper of these Heriots should be understood. In these pages the resemblances of that family will be readily noted, and the faults and virtues of the father will explain the qualities of the son. My lord took nothing that I could ever see from his mother's blood, unless it was a better gentleness of manner, and, for his face, a small mouth and a paler colour. His nose was that of his race, straight and long, and the eyes were of a bright violet—a strange hue to look on, which seemed ever to pick you out and hold you like the shining of steel. His portrait that hangs in the long corridor of Heriot Deane, painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller after his return from the Low Countries, and at the age of twenty-nine, declares those attributes of his family. And he came, notwithstanding, of my own blood upon the side of his mother, Patricia, who was the daughter of Sir Hubert Mace, Baronet, and the sister of my father Sir Edward. Sir Hubert Mace was a gentleman of good estate in the county of Wiltshire, whose disposition throughout the unhappy struggle was more towards peace than for an active prosecution of the war. He was of Lord Falkland's party, and first met the third Lord Cherwell during the early part of the Long Parliament. He was mortally wounded at Edgehill, a fight in which he reluctantly took part after an attempt to come to an understanding with the King. But the friendship of the two houses survived and was extended, and it was during the lifetime of my father, and upon the Earl's retirement into the country, in 1652, that the alliance was

brought about. Upon the death of the Earl some four years later, the Countess of Cherwell found herself with a wasted revenue, and my small lord of two. I was myself his elder by five years, and, as was natural from the consanguinity, and the nearness of the properties, I saw much of him. We were brought up together for some years, and his time was spent quite as much in Mottisley as at Dulsiebridge. Heriot Deane was a huge park, widely spread, and reaching into the New Forest, with great corners on the river Dulsie, where, as children, my lord and I were used to play together. So that I grew up very soon to have a warm heart for him, which is one reason why I have desired that this history should not fall into other and less kindly hands. The Countess of Cherwell, a handsome woman, and over young to be so burdened as a widow and a mother, had been deeply attached to her husband, and was equally devoted to his son. She was sweet and melancholy-smiling, as I remember her, but employed a gentle discipline with her household which was the occasion of an incident that I recall in illustration of my lord's childhood. He had suffered for some fault, and came forth frowning, but with a head lifted very high.

"Hilary," says he in his impetuous manner, "I have been beaten."

"You deserved it, cousin," said I.

"I asked not your criticism," he answered sharply, "I had the honour to give you a fact. There is none but my mother and the King shall use me so."

I shrugged my shoulders, for I was growing into manhood, and the boy's whim did not anger me. But he went on :

“I may be punished by the Countess of Cherwell,” says he, “I will not deny it. For she is what she is.”

“She is my aunt,” quoth I, smiling.

“You lie, Hilary,” says my lord angrily, “she may be aunt to a dozen louts, but that will not touch her; she is my mother,” and at that moment, the door opening, out steps my lady with her slow and gracious gait, moving towards the stair. My lord gives a start, and going forwards offers her his arm, which she accepting with a smile, down they go together, my lady’s garments rustling on the stairway, and my lord with every drop of Heriot blood trembling and glowing in his face.

The estates of Heriot Deane were left to the Countess undisturbed at the Restauration. This act of mercy was due in some degree to the offices of my father, who had taken no part in the civil tumult, and who had been openly favourable to the return of King Charles. But more properly, as I conjecture, it was owing to the impoverishment of the family, and to the superfluity of other and more valuable escheats. Yet the careful husbandry of the Countess succeeded in enlarging the revenues, and by the time my lord was of age he was put in possession of a tolerable property. My lady died the next year, within a week of her brother, my father, and upon that my lord abruptly closed the house and carried his servants to London.

I saw little of him the next three year, which were to prove indeed of prime importance in his life. Yet reports of his condition reached me at Mottisley, and he made one or two visits himself to his own house. From what I put together of the rumours, he was not like to be long in the enjoyment of that patrimony so diligently pre-

served to him. He had the name of spendthrift, and kept wild company. He was let loose upon life too soon for prudence, and must kick his heels up with the young bucks of London. There came to me intelligence at this time that he was taken up in Court, and that the King was very pleasant to him. There was talk too of some fine madam who had been caught by his handsome looks. It was plain that he practised arms a great deal, and he fell into more than one quarrel, like every Heriot. My lord told me afterwards that it was to the Countess of Southesk that he owed his introduction to the Court, for that she, slipping into an evil temper, threw out her stick and struck my lord on the face, who, approaching the chair with a bow, offered his most humble apologies for the accident. And I conceive that his air or his impertinence affected her; at least she carried him away to Whitehall, and by a singular piece of irony presented him to the Duke, who was notoriously indulgent to her.<sup>1</sup> Thus it was that these protagonists, the one so high and famous, and the other but a poor and impecunious nobleman, met face to face for the first time, without a foreboding of what should follow.

For some time my lord attached himself to the Duke's household, but presently, with the fickleness of youth and the recklessness of his family, he abandoned his court of his Highness, and was seen most in the company of Mr. Jermyn, who was at that time the most considered fop about his Majesty, and the cynosure of ladies' eyes. Lady Castlemaine herself was desperately sick of love for

<sup>1</sup> The character and history of this lady are set forth by Hamilton in the *Memoirs of Count Gramont*, ch. viii.—ED.



him, and, as I understand, accepted his young friend in favour and procured him the smiles of the King. But of a truth my lord was of too extravagant a spirit to suffer the restraint of Courts, and he used the King's palace much as he would use an inn, as a house to visit at will and to pop in and pop out on the caprice. Yet Charles, as I have heard, had a kindness for him, and declared that he kept my lord for his monkey tricks, as, said he :

“When I am dull in the morning I call for this boy's offences, and there is certain to be an angry face about me.”

Sir Humphrey Strutt told me that once my lord making a merry speech to the King, his Majesty laughed, and says he cynically :

“My lord, you are very wise, but I have ever a fear lest you shall take me some day by a button into the corner and show me how I should manage my mistresses.”

“I should get more profit, your Majesty,” says my lord very quick, “by showing your Majesty's mistresses how to manage your Majesty.” With which rejoinder the King, as Sir Humphrey said, was very pleasantly tickled.

His conduct about the Court was the topic of several stories, the which it would be unseemly to set down, more especially as he was at the time but a youth of three-and-twenty. But an episode, which bears immediately upon his later fortunes, I must here notice in the most delicate terms that I may. There was about the town at that time a certain Lady Ellicott, a handsome woman of thirty, who had buried a wealthy husband in the West, and had subsequently passed through many affairs. She had the remains of great beauty, but much worn and

ravaged, yet was not willing to abdicate her throne. And indeed, when I saw her, which was some years later, she was still a strangely handsome woman, and of a diabolic wit. It seems then that this fashionable lady clapped her greedy eyes on my lord Cherwell, who was so much her junior, and nothing must serve but to set him off against her other admirers. Among these was Lord Rochester, one that never expected any faith in man, nor credited it in woman. But these two the lady contrived to bring into conflict, and my lord was presently calling for his sword. My lord Rochester made some silly and disreputable jest, but Cherwell was all for falling on—seeing which his rival made a gesture of distaste.

“Tush!” says he, speaking low, “she is not worth it, my lord.”

“What is it that you say?” cried my lady in a shrill voice.

“I was saying, Madam,” said Lord Rochester lightly, “that ’tis a pity two good gentlemen should be burning to do one another an evil, when instead they were the better doing your ladyship some good.”

“Truth,” says she, laughing, “I think you speak well, and indeed I need a new petticoat.”

“Petticoat!” exclaimed Lord Rochester with a bow, “if I had only been a snip I should dare measure you for it.”

“They have my measure in Paris, my lord,” says she with a toss.

“Then, by God, to Paris I will go!” he answered lightly.

“By God, you shall not!” cried my lord, “it is I that take that pleasure upon me!”

And my lord Rochester, being thus committed to the adventure, the two departed that night upon a race to France. It was a silly enterprise, but of a complexion that suited my lord Rochester very well. He made it the talk of the Court for weeks, and I do not know that he took it very hardly in the act. The tale is long and something tedious in its particulars, but it was my lord Cherwell that got the petticoat, it was stolen from him at Boulogne by Lord Rochester, and he only repossessed himself of it by strategy within an hour of encountering the lady.

But there was another side to my lord's life in London which also was to play a part in his future. The blood of those Heriots, as I have said, ran very strongly, and at times broke its course. He was not merely a popinjay about the Court, but he cultivated also very different company. The truth was that my lord was of too restless and sanguine a spirit to lie comfortably among frivolities. Excitement called him, and the dissipations of those early years appear to me to be but the outbreak of a feverish nature. At Whitehall he came upon the young Duke of Monmouth, that was the son of Lucy Walters. The King indulged his son beyond what was thought fit, and, what is worse, the hot-head intermeddled with politics. Thus my lord was brought to know Lord Shaftesbury, to whom Monmouth looked up as guide, and Algernon Sydney also was among his friends. I dare say that the traditions of his house drew him to those who had once been adherents of the Commonwealth. My lord was proud of his father's services, and one of that name and descent was welcome to Sydney. But the influence of Ashley went deeper, and I suppose that

there was no force that helped to mould Lord Cherwell's opinions greater than that acquaintance saving only his blood and natural character.

But the chief incident of those three years, and that which led mainly to his banishment from Court, was his unfortunate interference in the Popish Plot. By this time he had grown older and more confident, and his age added nothing to his prudence. Moreover, Shaftesbury had fanned his zeal, and pretended to see in him the instrument of a great reformation. He openly professed his repugnance to the Duke, and recalled the deliverance wrought by Cromwell.

"I bear him no malice," he is reported to have said, "but I think shame to see the clock set back. Our fathers have not died to set such a man upon the throne. But the King is another matter."

With these sentiments informing him it is no wonder that the agitation of those days found him ripe enough. With the first news of Oates he was all agog, and, clad in his richest apparel, was to be seen conducting that miserable creature to give witness before Sir Edmondbury Godfrey. He nursed a dislike of the Catholics, which those revelations provoked, and he did not spare his tongue. The King bent before them, but it is certain that he did not believe one word, whether of Oates or Bedloe or the others of that crew. But my lord swallowed the whole story, and for a time was full of the business. He wrote letters to Monmouth demonstrating to what these evils pointed. The Queen was barren, and after this, he declared, there was none so bold as to set the Duke of York upon the throne.

"I tell you," he warned Sydney, "that not one of

that traitor faith shall ever be accepted of the commons of England.”

But suddenly his voice ceased and he vanished from the scene. The facts are still hidden in mystery, but from what he has dropped to me on one occasion or another, his eyes had been rudely opened. He threw off Oates and the rest, and with characteristic recklessness appeared at Court, as impetuous and smiling as ever. But the mischief was done, the King looked coldly on him, and by the agreement of the wits, his career was ended. Nevertheless he still held arrogantly to his place, and was at last given a plain hint. Sir Jacob Janus took the office in hand, and in the course of his work sneered broadly at him.

“Sheriff’s officer,” he called my lord, and added something about an “evidence.”

My lord set his hand on his sword.

“What you have done by your orders, sir,” said he, “that I pardon you. But for what is your own you shall die.”

And he was as good as his word. Sir Jacob fell next morning, and my lord withdrew the same day to Hampshire.

## CHAPTER II

### OF MY LORD'S RETIREMENT, AND OF THE ORGY AT HERIOT DEANE

MY lord returned in the spring of 1680, and sate down upon his estates all through that summer. He was now twenty-six and in the prime of a very manly beauty. His figure was slight, as with all the Heriots, and he stood somewhat above the middle stature. But I could not but observe the changes in him. When last I had seen him he was a lad in years as well as in development, but that time in the town and those exchanges at the Court had filled and stiffened his character and manner. He had the old ardour, it is true, and the impatience and the quickness that I remembered were still in force within him ; yet they were more hardly disciplined as a rule ; at least they made not the same appearance upon the surface save under unusual pressure. He was never a man for restraint, but by comparison with his earlier habit he might now be called reticent. He retired within himself more, or at any rate he seemed to ; for I have sometimes judged that his silence was due rather to pre-occupation, or, it may be, to mere indifference of his audience. He would flash out occasionally from a deep

passion, and then he was disordered and violent enough. Moreover, there were periods in which he was for days together the veriest chatterbox, and would keep blabbing of his thoughts with the utmost recklessness and gaiety, so that you seemed to see him starting out of his own words, like a shadow from the mirror. I had good opportunity for these observations, for it so happened that I was, myself, a visitor at Heriot Deane for long weeks at a time that summer. The fact was, that my lord's affairs were gotten into such an evil state that he could make nothing of them, and, being impatient of figures and an execrable man of business, he begged me to assist him. I was the more willing that I could make some use of the library at Heriot Deane, being engaged at that time upon a survey of the surrounding counties as far to the west as Somersetshire, which was subsequently completed and published. I found my lord's revenues had shrivelled pitiably, but I made shift to put them upon a proper footing. He was indifferent as to his outgoings, and no consideration in this world would stop his generosity. He gave lavishly of what he had, and unloaded his pockets before he could sleep with comfort every night. For the most part he occupied himself with simple pastimes, being among his dogs, of which he was inordinately fond, and practising falconry. He never asked for company nor appeared to seek it, but took his meals alone or (when I was there) along with me, drank sparingly, ate but little, and was usually very quiet. You would never imagine, to see him thus, that he was so lately busy about the Court, and jumping from one excitement to another among the intrigues of policy or religion. And yet I have evidence that he meditated

sometimes upon these matters, though I do not believe that as a rule he gave them a single thought. For he was possessed of a high imagination, but had little concentration of mind. He proceeded, as it were, by instinct, took his steps at a bound, and never turned back nor doubled. Add to this, above all, that he was never conscious of himself yet was wholly self-centred, and you will see that my lord was not like to brood at all upon his mistakes. But I have drawn him out at times, as for example when he spoke of the Duke.

“I would not let such a man as that daunt me, prince though he be,” says he, patting of his dogs, “no, not for the coffers of King Lewis.”

And in truth that sentiment was the key of his destiny, and when he spoke that he spoke his own epitaph. For although he knew it not, nor the Duke neither, this sojourn at Heriot Deane was bringing the great conflict a stage nearer, as will presently appear.

My lord was ever on his legs, for he was no student, and detested books. His restless temperament sent him roving about the country as he had roved about the streets of London. One day he came into the library, and after a glance upon me, as if to know why I used my time so ill, he walking up to a bookcase and pulling out a volume, examined it curiously. Presently he sate down and rested his chin upon a hand, while his eyes were fastened upon the pages. But he was like that for no longer than ten minutes, when he threw down the book with a crash.

“I should like to write, Hilary,” says he. “If I had your pen I would write a history. I would write an indictment. By God, but I would,” says he, flinging out



his hand, "it would be the Stewarts that I would condemn. They have done nothing but mischief, they are dragons upon the country. Even the King is in the French pay," and he paused, with sparkling angry eyes. "But I like the King," he added abruptly, and left the room without asking me for a reply.

These two small incidents I would not have mentioned did they not exhibit a latent and increasing temper of his mind; for it is my object to note nothing here that did not prove of consequence to his career. And the next episode I come to was of chief importance.

The Vicar of Dulsiebridge was at that time the Reverend James Garland, who had held the living under the Commonwealth, and had shifted his opinions with the Restoration. He was a man of some fifty-five years, and was in repute as a physician among the villagers, being of a kindly tolerant disposition which made no account of recusants. Indeed, though he was an entertaining companion, he appeared to me always to have no just bottom to his professions, and to accept one party or another according to his convenience. But my lord was fond of him, owing, indeed, the little education he boasted to that divine, and the two were apt to talk very free and engagingly before me. Garland was even better acquainted than I with my lord's revolutions in town, and took him to task with humble cynicism.

"You are not to suppose, my lord," said he, "that the course you have pursued will lead you to prosperity. It is on the contrary. For you seem to have lent one lug to the gutters and t'other to the Court. A man must be plain-faced and simple in his duplicity to make a way

at Courts. But you, to my mind, my lord, are neither flesh nor fowl nor good red herring."

Upon which my lord laughed, and declared that he had left a fair reputation among the ladies.

"Why, yes," says Garland, "I credit it; for such silly talk will take them. But you have here a poor dish for your stomach, and even Sir Hilary can scarce better it for you. I will confess, my lord, that I had looked for more deliberation from you. This estate has gone to wrack for a generation, and you are he that should build it up. I know nothing of Courts, but I hear of this miss and that to suit the architect. There was Miss Warmester——"

"Miss Warmester," says my lord, interrupting, "is in a case where no man but the one should marry her, and he is debarred."

"I see you are acquainted with more news than I," quoth the parson. "But there are a dozen ladies with no such obstacle, and perhaps greater invitations. I would not have you seduce; no, but I would have you marry and take your part," says he.

But my lord, changing his voice, broke out quickly. "I have a part," he cried, "and a part I will play, an it please God, at no great distance."

But the parson shook his head. "He is thinking of the Duke of Monmouth," he whispered to me. "But it is a disgrace that one so born should be so considered. My lord should know it, my lord should know it."

It was within a week of this talk, and while I was at Heriot Deane for the third time that year, that my cousin and I, with this parson for company, were riding on the highway, where the Dulsie leaves the park for the

meadows under a stone bridge. In the midst of a jest from Garland my lord pulled up his horse.

"What is this?" he says, looking with his eyes towards the distance, where a cloud of dust rolled up in the August air.

"It is maybe the justices," said the parson. And the word soothing his curiosity, my lord rode on again and we turned into a lane that ran for the house. He called Moll and Shag, the falcons, to his wrist, and as he waited the cavalcade streamed by in a swirl of dust. My lord let his gaze slip easily upon it, and of a sudden, clapped his thigh, and his eyes sparkled.

"By God," he says. "But it is my lady Ellicott."

"Who is that?" says the parson, who was anxious to be posted in what news he might.

"I fear my mouth is not large enough," said my lord with a smile, "nor my tongue bold enough to explain the lady. But ask of London stones, or for the matter of that, ask of her maids. They are in a better way to judge."

With that he rode on, and we reached home without further conversation upon the topic. But that was not the end of it, or I would not have introduced it here. It appeared that the lady, on her road from Town, had descended upon the village, and had taken possession of the "Forest Inn," a huge house with rambling wings. There were half-a-dozen gentlemen in her train, who boasted themselves her admirers, and she was set for her place in the Quantocks. When my lord heard this he put his tongue in his cheek, and considered a little.

"I will play her a trick," he says, nodding, and his eyes glimmering. "I will play her a good honest

country trick, like any yokel, and you shall help me, Hilary.”

He vowed that we must set up as footboys to draw for them, the parson too; and, carrying his resolve against a weak opposition, sent word to the innkeeper of his intention. But he, not daring to deny my lord, was in a taking for fear of some offence to the lady.

“Zounds,” said my lord. “D’ye think I’m not as good as your chawbacons? I will fetch and carry with any. I have been used to the business with this same lady.”

And without more ado up he walks in his kerseymere into the dining hall. The office did not sit very well upon me nor upon the parson neither, who, for all his philosophy, was ever afraid of his coat; but we carried it through as decently as might be. And all would have gone well had it not been for my lady’s sharp eyes. She never so much as looked on this pack of serving-men, among whom were her own varlets, and possibly it was upon this that my lord reckoned. Yet I fancy he had intended some surprise, though perhaps it fell when he did not expect it. For Lady Ellicott would simper and bridle at the gentlemen that were there, eating with her; and I thought her a very foolish if a handsome woman, in which I misjudged, as you shall see. But in the midst of it all some one turns the talk upon some story of an orange-girl, and immediately up comes my lord’s name.

“Lard, yes,” says the lady. “The rogue was in that, and none the better of it, as I can tell you. ’Twas that drove him from Town.”

“But, my lady,” says one of the gentlemen, “indeed

it was the Plot that did it. He was fetch-and-carry for Oates, and it was said he was privy to the conspiracy. It was common talk, and my cousin it was that was second to Sir Jacob."

I looked at my lord, but he lacked expression, and stood bowing over the man that said this, a bottle in his hand. I thought the insolence would have broken him out, but it was never possible to say what would move him. His character was so devious. He caught my look, and his eyes were running with laughter.

"Pest!" said my lady Ellicott. "D'ye suppose my lord Cherwell would be put down by a plot? There is no power would shake my lord, no power save a woman. I know it, because I have shook him."

At which there was a cackle of laughter, and one there ventured on a coarse jest, at which they roared the louder. But my lady turned crimson with anger, and burst out like a shrew.

"Faith, sir," she cried. "Were there one in this room as fit a man as he, I should not be so affronted. You call yourself a wit, but you wipe up my lord Rochester's dregs, and gather his discards. My lord Cherwell would teach you wisdom and how to face a lady," and on the words her angry glance flashing upon the company, which was fallen into a state of uneasiness, she happened suddenly upon my lord's face, where he stood, silent but alert. She broke off with a gasp, and then, "Why, 'slife, 'tis the wretch himself," she screamed, and the whole table was quickly in a flutter.

But my lord came forward in his kerseymeres, and bowing deeply, "'Tis he, Madam," says he, "and quite of a mind to turn school-master for the nonce."

He looked on the gentleman that had raised the lady's anger, and put his hand where his sword should have been. But I suppose his reputation had spread widely, and that the savage duel with Sir Jacob was in their minds; for no one stirred, and there was no answer to the unspoken challenge. Indeed it was the lady that came to the rescue in another spirit than before.

"Oh fie, my lord," says she, languishing. "'Tis not the fact I mind, but I will not have the word put upon me. It has a horrid sound," and she shrugged her shoulders, mincing and smiling at him.

My lord laughed and dropped his hand. "I will not presume to judge your own mind, madam," said he. "But in truth I have a quarrel with some one for betraying me."

"Then 'tis with me," she says, bridling.

"Madam," says Cherwell, very politely, "I have enjoyed nothing so much in this life as my conflicts with you. I would be on bad terms with you all day, if you would allow it."

"My dear villain," she said in a lively voice. "You shall take what you will your own way; for I swear I know none that repents so prettily. But what do you in this guise, so swept and garnished, and whither are your fine feathers fled?"

"Madam," says Anthony humbly, "I am come to this, but by your grace and the favour of these gentlemen I see I have hopes to mount in the business, I and my co-partners in misfortune."

The lady broke out giggling. "I had heard you were ruined," she called.

My lord beckoned me. "My cousin," says he with a ceremonious obeisance, and then, with a wave of his hand, "the parson," he added, indicating the Reverend James Garland, where he stood, leaning against the wall and shuffling and frowning, all red about the face. Lady Ellicott threw her head back and cackled after the habit of the fashion. "Mr. Parson," quoth she, "a glass of wine with you and master cousin. I vow if I were in your shoes and of your stature, I would make shift to break a window with this Cherwell."

This she said by way of reference to my height, for I stood very tall, and my lord, as I have said, was of no uncommon size.

"I think," said I, "with your ladyship's permission, I will now leave him to break his own windows, an he will."

"And by Heaven," cries my lord suddenly, "that's a good thought, Hilary," with which he hurled the bottle he held with a great noise through the casement, and out into the roadway. At which, as if it had been a secret signal, the whole company, which had been slowly shaping itself into comfort, grew quickly boisterous—the lady chief of them all; and my lord raised his voice and swore that they should every one be carried to the House, varlets, baggage and all, for that he was king there if the King prevailed at London, the which sinister utterance passed without notice in that public merriment. But one protested against the removal.

"We are twenty of us," says this sensible fellow.

"Ye shall have your twenty beds," shouted Cherwell, "and if that will not serve ye," says he, bringing his fist upon the board, "ye shall find your couches on the floor.

I promise you I will have a pandemonium," he said. "I will have a pandemonium."

It was plain that a madness had seized on him that night, and no word would avail with him. He was possessed with a devil of mischief, and what happened was amazingly indecorous. There were some three women among the guests at Heriot Deane, and they paid no heed to their sex, being foremost among the brawlers that night. My lord was overbearing, and, if I had not seen how the matter lay, I should have taken offence with him. But he had drunk a good deal, contrary to his wont, and his violet eyes sparkled with fire, so that I thought it best to leave him to his orgy unquestioned. Nothing was too extravagant for his purpose; his conduct was of a piece with Bedlam, and Lady Ellicott gave him encouragement, laughing and jesting and drinking with them all. The scene, in a word, was unbecoming to a gentleman's house, and I do not care to dwell upon its particulars, but come at once to what fell in the end, and at the time when the pleasures were wildest and the appearance of the company most unseemly. In the middle of some mummery in the big hall, where my lord himself was in motley habit, acting some antics, and the rest of the folk were shrieking and scrambling together like a flight of sparrows on a windy day, the door fell open, and in walks a young miss of some fifteen years. It was my eyes that were first directed on her, for I was taking no part in the noise, and stood somewhat aside watching the scene with a little impatience. There was Babel in the hall—Pandemonium indeed, as my lord had promised—and upon that the apparition of a quiet little figure, clad in some linsey-woolsey, and looking out of



large eyes very scared and astonished. But ere I could go forward and intercept the child, my lord turned, and his gaze fell on her.

“What the devil’s this?” he cried. “I own none such, I vow. I take my lady to witness that my years are insufficient to father this.” This he said, as I believe, merrily on the prick of the moment, and as yet quite unable to understand the situation. But his words drew my lady’s eyes, and, with a glass in her hand, she stared at the slight creature.

“What do you here, chitty-face?” she cried shrilly. “Odds, I’ll learn you to spy upon me. Get ye back, ye little imp, or I’ll tear the skin off you.”

“Nay, nay,” cries Cherwell, laughing pleasantly. “I will have no guests of mine used so. But she shall drink a cup with us ere she go to bed.”

He filled a glass, not very steadily, and with a great bow approached and offered it to the miss. But she still was silent, looking from one to another with timid eyes, and yet with a little haughtiness. But upon Cherwell, as he was bended before her, her gaze fell, quickened with a spice of terror and distaste, and she shrank away.

“Drink, you fool you,” said my lady from her seat.

“Madam,” says the child, recovering by an effort her courage, “I am reluctant to have sought you thus, but indeed I had no choice. I was left at the inn, and deserted by the maids, whereupon, hearing that you were here, I followed, but with no intent to break in upon you so nor interrupt these gentlemen.” Her voice, for all its spirit, quavered, and Cherwell drew himself up and looked down on her.

“Who is this? Is she your daughter?” says he,

casting his eyes towards Lady Ellicott, and speaking shortly.

“Oh Lord! what insolence,” she cried shrilly. “Daughter! Why, what accusation do you bring upon me? But indeed I tell you this—why; if she be my daughter she is yours, my lord arrogant.”

“’Tis Sir Stephen Ellicott’s child,” says some one, who had kept his senses. “Her ladyship’s step-daughter.”

Lady Ellicott nodded. “And she shall be taught,” says she angrily, “to interpose upon her elders. She is a sly minx, I’ll warrant you, and ’tis not for nothing she comes here. Get ye to bed, you spawn you,” she said sharply, and to that she added an immodest word.

One tipsy fellow that was present, by name Sir John Browning, tops that with something else, and advancing, proffered his glass in the same way as Cherwell had done. I do not suppose he meant any harm by this sally, being too far gone to know what he did; but my lord suddenly stepped out, and with a motion of his arm sent the glass flying, so that the wine was poured upon the jester.

“By heaven,” says he. “Her ladyship says well, and I begin to see that I have neglected the paternal duties. And the first of those,” he says, “is that my daughter shall be saved from such company,” with which, his eyes glancing in his head, he put the child’s hand in his arm, and marched out of the room.

“I will see you properly served, my dear,” says he angrily. “I will have the house turned about, but you shall be properly served.”

But the rest were left staring on one another, and my lady tapping her fan and biting her lips.

## CHAPTER III

HOW MY LORD CHERWELL SOUGHT LORD RUSSELL AND  
FOUND ANOTHER

THE meeting with Lady Ellicott and her train brought other consequences that affected my lord, and for the moment more deeply. For he had some news from one of the gentlemen which took him off to Holland upon an instant resolution. I know not what intelligence he received, nor how it concerned him ; but it is pretty certain that at this time he had been in communication with some of the political parties, the Duke of Monmouth's for one, and I make bold to add Ashley's name to that. He picked up some idle piece of gossip that set his blood in a fret, and within two days he was posting for town. A week later he was in the Hague, and, so far as I know, never once set foot upon English soil during the next three years. I have sometimes heard my lord speaking of that absence, and of the experiences he encountered abroad ; but if any material design took him thither I never learned. He was as careless as he was frank, and at no time was he one to explain himself or his actions. He would have told me the truth, no doubt, had I asked him ; but during my lord's life I had

no thought of writing this history, and after his death it was too late. Besides, I am not given to cross-question any man upon his private business. But it is certain that he was very friendly with the Prince of Orange in Holland, and he was in correspondence with the Duke of Monmouth, who was for some time also a resident at that court. Yet if Lord Cherwell were there for any political purpose, I know enough of him to doubt if he adhered to it consecutively through those years. For one thing he spent a long time in Paris, and was heard of about King Lewis's court, where he was well received, despite all. His name has been spoken in a breath with that of Madame la Comtesse de Berneval, and 'tis probable that he lived in Paris much the same life that he had passed in London. So far as he was concerned in the intrigues of state it was owing to Shaftesbury, at all times his evil genius, and now in the last decline of his power. Indeed his trial took place during my lord's absence, and though he was acquitted to the popular satisfaction, he withdrew shortly to Holland only to die. And that brings me to the hour of my lord's return from exile.

There was a meeting between Shaftesbury and my lord at the Hague, when I cannot doubt that the older and discredited man fanned anew the zeal of his pupil. The public feeling in England, and in Scotland also, ran strongly against his Highness the Duke, and though Shaftesbury had fallen, it was possible at any time to build up a fresh agitation. This indeed was taken in hand by a band of zealots, including my lords Russell and Essex, with Lord Howard of Etrick and Algernon Sydney, who were sworn together to keep the Duke from the succession. To those who feared a Catholic on the throne the progress

of affairs was disconcerting, and they flew into conspiracies more or less abortive. There was cause for their alarm in the growing authority of the Duke, who at this time was dictating the King's policy; so that in the jest of Mr. Waller, the people being resolved that the Duke should not reign after the King's death, the King was resolved that he should reign during his life.

In the midst of this discontent and excitement my lord Cherwell landed in England, and went straight to the centre of this disaffection like a hound to a scent. He bore letters from Shaftesbury to the Duke of Monmouth, whom it was designed by these conspirators to place upon his father's throne, and also to Lord Russell; and coming into London of a fine spring evening ate a supper at the Blue Posts, and went on to Lord Russell's house to acquaint him with his arrival and his messages. Lord Russell was away, nor could his servants say where; and so, remembering a word he had caught from Shaftesbury, my lord marched off for Shepherd's, a wine-house in the town that was used by these people as a rendezvous. 'Twas a piece of folly that was in character with his nature; for it was not likely that he could gain admittance to an assembly, if any there were, held for such private ends and so clandestine. But, as it chanced, he did obtain his wish, though in another manner than he could have guessed. Once in the shop he made no hesitation, but demanded to know if my lord Russell were there. The owner of the place eyed him, but gave no answer, and Cherwell repeated his words with impatience.

"I know none called so," says Shepherd, a thin, tall and silent man, whom I have often seen.

"Come, you fool," said my lord angrily, "I have

business of importance with my lord Russell. Give me a plain and honest answer."

"I have said, Sir, that I know not the nobleman," said Shepherd slowly, "and that being so, 'tis plain he is not here."

"And since I know," says my lord, mocking him, "that the nobleman is known to you, 'tis plain, I suppose, that he is here."

"You have had your answer," said Shepherd, and turned away.

My lord sat awhile drinking in the house, and considering with himself. He was manifestly distrusted, and it irked him to be so foiled. Yet he could do little good by persisting, for the man might be speaking the truth. But, on the contrary, he knew that some meetings had been held at this place, and if there was one in course now, it was pressing that his message should reach Lord Russell. While he was pondering how he should best break in, and if he could accomplish anything that way, a man coming out of the interior rooms drew his attention, and, something familiar recurring in his appearance, he presently recognized him for one West, a creature of Shaftesbury's and a man of stale reputation. This West passed out of the doorway, and Cherwell, having now little doubt something was afoot, went after him. But outside the night was gathered very thick and black, and the street being full of corners, he quickly lost sight of the fellow. Yet he might have caught him again but for an interruption which turned the current of his attention. For he heard, sounding from no great distance, and as it seemed up a little alley, a great cry of terror which was clearly of some wench in trouble. Cherwell darted across

the way, leaving his hunt, and ran into the darkness that hung about this by-way. But now the noise had stopped, and he went along the alley without spying any cause of the distress; so that he was about to abandon his search and go back to the wine-house, when his glance was caught suddenly by a flutter of white that came from a wall. My lord came to a halt and peered close.

“What is this?” he says, seeing that there was some person here.

“You will mind your own affairs, if you are wise,” said a voice, and out of a small passage stepped a tall man and faced him boldly.

“My affairs,” says Cherwell pleasantly, “can wait. I have time on my hands; and as far as I can judge, my good sir, from your voice and manner I can well spend some upon you.”

“You are an insolent man,” exclaimed the man, “and I will spit you, an you turn not and run.”

“By the lord,” cries Cherwell, “you are a rogue after my heart—a tall Bobadil this. But first I will see what you have here,” and he made a step to the passage. The man barred his way. But Cherwell, swift as a thought, swung him round with a twist of his wrist so that he toppled into the roadway, and deftly slipped into the passage. He put out his hand through the darkness, and his fingers closed upon a flimsy piece of stuff.

“I thought so,” he said. “’Tis some wench you have been abusing.”

“Indeed,” says a voice from within, very rough but civil. “’Tis but that jade, my sister Sal, who is wont to mistake her proper appetite for ale. I swear ’tis nothing but she.”

“Sal, Sal !” says my lord, wagging his head and laughing, “come ye forth, and I will read you a lesson upon drunkenness and screams and other wickednesses.” He took hold of the woman’s arm and made as though to pull her from where she lay upon the stones. But now the first fellow was at his back again and interrupted gruffly—

“I told you we want no interference on us,” he said angrily.

And the truth is that Cherwell, for all his obstinate humour, was beginning to weary of the business, nor did he conceive it humorous to be drawn into a quarrel with some rough fellows upon a drunken quean. There is no doubt he would have stopped, but at that instant his hand had touched the woman’s face, and he discovered she was gagged. This revelation arrested all his wits.

“By God,” he said, and with a motion twisted the gag free. There was no sound on that, but my lord set his hand to his sword, “Who are you ?” he asked.

With an oath one of the ruffians flung upon him, and Cherwell put out his weapon.

“Back,” he called, “or I will send you to your proper keeper down below. There is an ill business here. Who is this ye have gagged ?”

There was no reply, and he stooped again and felt for the woman. Now the passage was so black that it was not possible to see at all within its walls, and no doubt this obscurity held those rogues quiet, for they knew not where to strike. But they must have considered that they had Cherwell safe enough, for his egress was blocked upon either side, and the strait was too narrow to suffer the free use of his sword. But he, knowing this, pulled



his burden gently to her feet, and caught the sound of a long sigh. This done he set his face towards the further part of the passage, whence the civiller voice had issued, and with the woman dragging on his left arm ran lightly forward, thrusting, thrusting, thrusting as he went. There was a sharp cry when his point at last took something ; at which, turning rapidly, he dashed as hard as he might towards the other entrance. Now this design was but to catch the tall villain unawares, when he should suppose there was yet some distance to the spot on which his companion was being assaulted. And the trick succeeded ; for ere he had gone three paces my lord ran his point into the breast of the other. He fell with a cry, and raised a shout, on hearing which, and in the fear that there might be more of them, Cherwell scrambled over his body and got out into the alley with the woman. He was right in suspicion, for there came out upon them from a door near by, summoned doubtless by that call, two or three men, who set upon him with swords. The woman had come to herself by this time, and, urging her to run, Cherwell fell on his assailants. But they were joined by a fourth, being one of the men from the passage, and he was driven to retreat, more especially as the place was so dark. His companion seemed at a loss what course to follow, and it was no wonder, the night being such. So that it happened the two were forced to withdraw upon the street in which the wine-house lay, now as black as the surrounding night. In such a blackness it was not possible to direct his footsteps, when engaged in plying the sword so briskly. My lord took a wound in the arm, and was pressed against a wall, the girl beside him. Fighting in this position he heard a rattling sound behind, and, on a

quick inspiration, put back a hand and found, as he had hoped, the handle of a door. It turned and the door gave, and the next instant he had caught up his companion, was over the threshold, and had bolted the lock. The which done, he stood and breathed fast for some moments, making an examination of their refuge.

A small swinging lanthorn shed some light upon the scene, and disclosed to him a long and narrow passage between heavy walls, with a flight of stairs at the end.

“We are got into some good citizen’s house,” says my lord, laughing, and then gives his eyes to the other. She was but a slip of a girl, as he could perceive under the twilight.

“Oh, sir,” she began, and her voice sounding clear but frightened, “’tis most noble in you to——”

“Nay, my dear,” says Cherwell, interrupting; “but ’tis not so noble in you, surely, to be in this abominable company. You are but a chit.”

So saying he drew her close to the lanthorn, and examined her with some surprise; for her dress was of a rich stuff, and she had the air and carriage of a gentlewoman.

“How came you there?” he asked, “and where are those that should overlook you?”

The girl’s eyes were fastened on his face with surprise as well as eagerness, and for all her pallor a dye of colour charged her face.

“They—I have lost them,” she answered after a show of hesitation. “I missed them in the market.”

“Lost?” said my lord, shrugging his shoulders. “I would teach them that would lose me so, and in so infamous a part. What did you in the market so late?”

“In my lady’s carriage,” said the girl. “She was driving to see the sport with the masques.”

“And what took ye from the carriage?” inquired he.

“The maid and I were set down by my lady,” she answered in some confusion, “who was to speak with a gentleman she knew. But the maid presently was snatched into the crowd—at least she disappeared, and I hope nothing has befallen her.”

“I’ll warrant she looked after herself better than you,” quoth my lord, smiling, and says he to himself, but aloud, “’Tis a scurvy drunken blunder to pitch her upon the town.” He stopped there and examined his coat indifferently, where he had been struck. But the girl gave a cry.

“You are touched,” she said in a fearful voice.

“Why, that is the right word,” said my lord, and bending his eyes on her again, “what were those fellows? How came you in their hands?” he asked.

She coloured deeply, displaying an embarrassment. “They pursued me from the market,” she said, “when I was seeking the carriage. I—I know nothing of them.”

“What?” said Cherwell, “five men to seize and stop a child’s mouth! What intentions had they on you? It is not for nothing five wretches like those conjoin.”

“I know nothing, my lord, save that I was followed and cowardly taken,” says she piteously.

“My lord!” echoed Cherwell, staring at her—at which she met his gaze with a flash of spirit.

“You are Lord Cherwell,” she said simply.

“Faith, my dear madam, then who are you?” said he, astonished.

"You have seen me before, my lord," she answered, flushing. "I am daughter to Sir Stephen Ellicott of Durcombe Manor, Somerset."

The memory returned on Cherwell, and he laughed softly.

"Here is a fortuity," he said; "I did not remember the maid, that is now grown woman. Why, my eyes must be blind, but that you grow so fast. Well," said he, "I must take you back to Lady Ellicott," and he put a hand on the latch.

The girl sprang forward. "No, no," she said; "they will be there. I know them. They will not go away. They will be in hiding."

My lord drew back with a frown. "What is this?" he said, "there is some strangeness behind this."

She coloured to a pink again and then fell pale.

"I think," he went on, observing her, "that there be more doors in a house than one, and by your leave, mistress, we will make trial of another."

With which and without more words he led her along the passage, and up the flight of stairs at the end.

By this ascent they came next into a small room, furnished very barely, and empty of tenants, that was immediately upon the landing. Here was a fire burning brightly, and a chair or two near the chimney-piece. There was no sound to be heard in the house.

"Maybe all are abed," whispered Cherwell. "But I vow we shall warm our toes ere we call the grocer," and, setting a seat for the lady, he sank into a chair and gazed at the fire.

"I would not have you ignorant, young mistress," said he presently, "nor do I conceive you to be innocent, how

great a peril you have passed. You should be but a child in years, though you show womanly in your stature,' for she was nigh as tall as himself. "But see, you are slight and weak, and the night is no time for merrymaking in the streets for such as your sex and condition. My lady Ellicott must see to it. Yet what is this strange thing—that you know these fellows? Why, is this abominable gang familiar?"

The girl was now quite white, and looked him in the eyes squarely.

"I have never seen their faces before," she said quickly. "I know not who they are, but that they took me."

"Oh well," says my lord with a shrug of his shoulders, and his pleasant smile quickly breaking out. "I shall know the face of one again. That, at least, shall lead me to an identity," with which he stretched out his foot and fell to looking in the fire. I have no doubt that he had lapsed into some other thoughts, for presently he started up.

"Sure, Mistress Ellicott," he said, "we must be invoking the grocer. I ask your pardon. 'Tis time we were 'scaped by t' other door," and he rose and offered her his arm, which done, the two proceeded upon an examination of the house. It was still possessed of silence, though lighted here and there in the narrow passages. The place rambled prodigiously and seemed to harbour no one. This was the thought they had in their impatience, but they were soon to be undeceived.

They came at last upon a second flight of stairs that led down to the floor below, and this they descended in the hope of thus reaching an outlet. But at the foot of

this two paths divided, and, the one appearing darker, my lord took the other, walking a little in advance of his companion. He had just made some tiny jest upon the house and its dumb owner, when a noise of voices suddenly reached them, seeming to come, muffled, from behind a door near by. My lord pushed this open, and there was a small ante-chamber with a greater room beyond, out of which streamed the voices. The closet was in darkness, but the further chamber was set in the glow of a fire; and the sight that he now saw sent my lord back with a low cry.

For as he entered the closet quietly, and was just aware of the two men beyond, the talk between these had suddenly ceased, and the one fellow had turned away from his companion, as it were in anger or in refusal. But the other said nothing, drawing nearer behind him, and with a stealthy movement; until, being quite close, he quickly plunged a dagger into his fellow's back, so that he fell without more than a sigh, and lay still on the floor. The act was so rapid that Cherwell was unable to anticipate so horrid a crime, and when he sprang forward the murderer was gone, having slipped from the room by another door. He lifted up the man on the floor, discerning him to be quite dead, and then he got to his feet and his glance fell on the miss, standing before the closet of the chamber, yellow in the firelight, with wide horror-struck eyes, and her body all shivering. He took hold of her kindly.

"I fear this is an ill night for you, my dear," says he, and draws her through the doorway after him, muttering, "Where the devil are we gotten now?"

He seemed to hesitate, as the lady related it to me long after, and then, considering, no doubt, that he was charged

with the care of this young madam, he began to go along the dark passage the way they had come. There opened before them now a door, leading into a recess hung with curtains, and beyond that again a chamber full of light and people. My lord came to a pause.

“This house will turn me crazy,” said he, but as quickly started, and his eyes beamed. “Good,” he said, “I recognize that voice, ’tis my lord Howard’s; and if your prettiness will await me here, I will fetch our way out of this labyrinth.”

So saying, and without asking for an answer, he pushed aside the curtains, entered the further room and left her.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT BEFELL IN THE WINE-HOUSE

Now this house was none other than Shepherd's, approached by a back way, and, quite unawares, Cherwell had stumbled upon the very assembly of which he had been in search. So he issued forth from the recess with brightening eyes, and stood looking on them with a smile. But immediately there fell consternation on the company, and some swords were drawn.

"The devil take you," said one big fellow. "But you shall have no time now to pity yourself for a spy," and he was for flinging himself upon my lord, who only laughed.

"Come, come," he said, "I am no spy, though so I should appear. But spies are not used to show themselves so boldly. And, moreover, there sits my lord Howard, and he, I'll warrant, will speak to me."

Lord Howard was staring at him, with his little sour and humorous smile.

"'Tis true," said he, "this is my lord Cherwell, I'll speak to his name. I bid you welcome, my lord, but I cannot speak to your opinions."



“My lord,” says Cherwell, flashing out, “my history is known to you.”

“Aye,” he says slowly, “you were of my lord Shaftesbury’s friends; but Ashley is fallen,” he says.

“And I,” said Cherwell haughtily, “am newly come from my lord Shaftesbury with letters for Lord Russell and his Grace.”

At this Howard’s face changed. “Is it so?” he said. “I crave pardon, my lord, but the world changes over-  
soon, and one is accustomed to meet the conspirator of to-day in the judge to-morrow. Not that we are conspirators here; oh no, my lord. We are a simple company tasting of Mr. Shepherd’s wine. And I will recommend to you that bottle, my lord,—a brave red bottle out of Burgundy.”

At this my lord laughed, and, all suspicion being now at an end, sat down among them, and filled a glass. There were half-a-dozen of them hatching this plot, and, as was manifest afterwards to any one without bias, in two very different ways, and with two very different designs. For Lords Russell and Essex, with Algernon Sydney and Mr. Hampden were for the succession of the Duke of Monmouth; whereas the more desperate accomplices desired the King’s death along with his brother’s. Of these, Rumsey and Rumbold were present that night, and Lord Howard, who wanted no man know what, also one Grimshaw, Goodenough, who was once under-sheriff of London, and West, a man of education and of a cynical wit. But of the other party there was not one, and my lord asked presently for Lord Russell.

“My lord is not here, having particular private

matters," said the man Rumsey quickly. "But I have spoken with him, and am convinced that he has this business at heart."

Rumsey had previously been in Cromwell's army, but had an evil reputation, and was, indeed, but a soldier of fortune and worse, whereas Rumbold, who had also served with the Protector, was of a fanatical temper, and a man of some estate.

"That is very well," says Cherwell lightly, "but where is your proof for this, sir? And are we to take for granted that the Lords Essex and Russell will join in this matter?"

"Not only they, but Sidney too," said West boldly, "and I trust my lord Cherwell also."

"What I?" says Cherwell easily. "No! faith, not I"—at which there was a movement among the rest.

"I said," quoth Howard with a grin, "that I knew not your opinions, my lord."

"And what are yours?" asked my lord, turning on him. "What are yours, I would ask you, my lord? I have heard great nonsense talked here, and (what is more) a great crime. That is the word, my lord, and I ask you to consider it. What else is it at which these gentlemen hint, Mr. West with his sly face, and Mr. Rumsey with his smile? They would have the Duke of Monmouth upon the throne for the sake of the Protestant succession. Why so would I, so would we all. But upon that comes a wink and a leer, and it is—How then would you deal with his Highness, and what will be his fortune? I tell you, my lord and gentlemen, 'tis an ugly deed at which ye are glancing. What else means this talk in whispers and in dark

sayings? And I would have ye tell me what it is this 'lopping'<sup>1</sup> does signify that ye talk of?"

"You shall know that, my lord," suddenly said Rumbold, rising to his feet, pale, and striking on the table. "The Lord of Hosts shall learn ye that soon enough. I will have no concealment. These deeds shall be fetched forth into the light."

"Aye," says Cherwell, "in the day of judgment."

"And the day of judgment is come," exclaimed the fanatic. "It has come for the Duke of York; yes, and for the King too."

"You have a design against his Majesty?" says Cherwell quickly, looking on the company.

Lord Howard cast his glance down upon the table, and the rest gave no answer save Rumbold, who was still upon his feet and now beside himself.

"Yes, we have a design," he said firmly, "and I will see to it that 'tis carried out. We are no children playing at quarrels, my lord, but very serious men, that have God's commands upon us."

At that Cherwell gave a laugh, but the other went on with no attention. "I have put my house and my life at the disposal of this council, and 'tis for them to answer; for we shall yet lop this tree so that the young shoots shall bear fruit in due season, and according to God's appointment."

Lord Howard was looking askew at Anthony, but West was the first that broke in.

<sup>1</sup> "Lopping" was used by these Rye House conspirators very euphemistically. See Burnett's *History of His own Time*, Book III.—Ed.

“’Twere easier to take them at the play than at Hodsdon,” said he.

“Sure,” says Howard with his grin, “they were best taken in so suitable a spot, that they may die in their calling.”

But my lord sprang to his feet. “My lord,” said he sharply. “You jest out of time. As this worthy fellow tells you, ye are here grave and earnest men, and not to cackle over a joke. But what a folly are you debating, that you think of this wicked course! I am come from Lord Shaftesbury, and I have spent much time with him. There is no man I honour as his lordship. I wish to God, too, that I might see his Grace of Monmouth ascending to his father’s throne, as is his proper right. But think you that these desires will fetch about the course of history? Nay; Shaftesbury will fight no more, and his Grace is no true leader. Ye would stand by a failing cause. I would not have you abandon that which is just, out of a fancy that it will not prevail, but rather to cleave to it. But ye must seek some other way. This cause is a noble one, to keep the true religion within this realm; but what do you propose to yourselves, foolish men? You would exact the penalties which only God has power to inflict, and that by abominable treachery. The King has betrayed the nation. Well; it is for us to remedy that trait’rous act. The Duke hangs upon us like a menace; we must thrust that menace away. I will have nought to do with your ‘loppings.’ Nay, I am no enemy, gentlemen, to ‘loppings.’ God do so to me and more also, if in the day of my trial I should be found wanting. My father is evidence for me; and the true history of my race. Yet

I bear testimony that ye are guilty of folly and of crime if ye push this thing further. What have we taken out of the death of King Charles I? what save this very present case in which we are? These feelings come with the rebound and spread inordinately. His Majesty was welcomed in the streets of London with greater acclamations than ever his father or his grandfather. 'Twas Cromwell's act that prepared the way for him. Think upon that, and consider. As for me, my lord Howard, I wash my fingers of the business, I disdain it; I go no further. And I would ask some gentleman if he would be so good as to guide me from this house."

When he had finished on these words he stood where he was, breathing a little sharper, as one described it, and passing his quick glances all about them. None spake for a moment, and then 'twas Grimshaw, of whom you shall hear anon.

"You have good counsel for your security, my lord," said he with a sneer. "His Majesty should thank you for your pleading."

But on that my lord broke furiously forth, as he was wont, and forgetting all his argument.

"By God," says he angrily, "but the king is the king, and that I say; and I think shame that his power should be disturbed by such crop-eared rogues."

Then angry words threw the whole assembly into confusion, and Rumsey and Rumbold rose with their swords drawn. My lord laughed shortly, and with one hand he contemptuously unhooked his scabbard and took it by the haft, meaning that he would scorn to be at the pains to defend himself against such as those with the sword. But

here West interposed in his cunning way, so as to soothe them.

"It seems," says he, "that we are liker to lop one another than any kings and princes."

"I will have you understand," said Cherwell sternly, "that I am not one of you."

"And will spread this intelligence against us," put in Goodenough, who had sat quiet till now.

Rumsey uttered an oath ; but my lord gave no answer, lowering his brows on those antagonists.

"I have asked," he said in a cool voice, "that some gentleman among you shall be pleased to conduct me from this house. My lord Howard, I wait on you."

Howard pulled up his shoulders in a motion. "I am not master here," he answered; "and 'tis pretty certain I shall be conducted myself an I taste further of this wine."

Cherwell hesitated, and while they were in this state of simmering hostility, a door across the room was pushed open, and a man entered and stood gazing at them in astonishment. He was very tall and of a shambling gait, with a high red nose, and a skin distempered from its natural sallow by the wind and sun ; and two small brown eyes peeped from beneath his bushy brows. For an instant the company started on this interruption, but immediately appeared to recognize the new-comer, and turned again to Cherwell. But he, his gaze drawn by the fellow in the midst of his present anger, fell suddenly back, and then sprang forward.

"My God," he said, "'tis the man," and moving round the table closed the door softly.

“What is this?” asked Grimshaw quickly, and the rest of the table was in amazement.

“This fellow here,” says Cherwell, pointing at him, “comes to you but newly dipped in crime. I myself was witness to a bloody murder that he wrought.”

“My lord,” says Howard, “you bring strange charges against us all.”

“I do not grudge a fair death,” said Cherwell with indignation, “but the rascal that strikes in the dark is another matter; and this was a foul deed that was done within this house.”

“What say you, Fergus?” asked one of the others.

The man mumbled some words indistinctly and ended with a sulking oath.

“My lord here is surely mistaken,” said Grimshaw softly. “If the man were you there must plainly be some error.”

“’Twas an error,” said he, and advancing with his ugly walk, put forth a hand and took a bottle from the table.

The impudence of the act, when he stood so charged, and in the face of that company, was so great, that my lord made a step forward holding his naked sword. It was as if the fellow Fergus scarce realized the danger in which he lay, and was at no trouble to be ceremonious or decent in his habits. He had brushed aside the accusation as if it were of no account, and that discharged, might now safely resort to his wine. But Cherwell was not to be so put down, and his eyes aflame, approached him.

“Look ye, sirrah,” he said, “I bear witness that I will have you hanged, you insolent rogue.”

But Fergus looked up, lifted his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, and without ever a word, raised his glass to his mouth and tossed off the wine.

My lord turned to Howard.

“Who is this man?” he asked.

Lord Howard shook his head.

“Faith, ask not me,” he replied. “I know who none is in these days. May be, he hath the royal blood,” which he said by way of a sneer for the king.

“’Tis an honest fellow that means well for the cause,” said Rumsey, “which is more than all can say that stand here.”

“Come, come,” said Grimshaw, adjuring him, “I think, Mr. Fergus, that my lord here needs some answers to his interrogations. He has put a charge upon you. How answer you it?”

Fergus stared across the table at him, a grin spreading over his face.

“I owe my lord some reparation for my silence,” says he harshly. “But my belly has made an uncommon demand upon me. But as for what he says, it is true enough; and there is one villain the less in the world. I cannot bear that I should waste words upon it.”

“Ha! who was this?” asked West abruptly.

Fergus took a drink from his glass, and crossed his knock-kneed legs. He looked on Cherwell impudently, replying to the question.

“He was a spy out of Cripplegate,” says he, “and one of the Duke’s inspiring, I doubt not.”

His eyes met Grimshaw’s, and it seemed to Cherwell that they twinkled. Grimshaw, who was a small lean



man, dressed very trimly, and with quiet even features, stroked his chin, and looked away at Cherwell, as though inviting him for his opinion. But my lord was greatly incensed by the conduct of this rascal, and he had grave suspicions, moreover.

“What! A stab in the back,” he said. “And is that the course of an honest man who fears nought, and keeps his conscience clean?” He turned towards the place where Howard sate, but he had stolen from the chamber, being ever of a craven spirit in the nick of trial; and he saw about him the kindling faces of Rumsey, West, and Rumbold. He flung down his sword with a clatter into its scabbard.

“This is no place for honest men,” he said angrily. “I pray you, sirs, direct me from this house.”

“Ye have entered of yourself,” sneered Rumsey, “and as you came, by God so shall you return.”

My lord turned on him in a passion, but at that moment, and as further words might pass, one of the men at table, hearing, no doubt, some sound within the alcove, sprang suddenly to his feet, and pulled back the hanging curtains.

Now it is plain that with the progress of this argument and the excitement of the dispute, my lord had come to forget the girl that sat awaiting him behind the arras. He was ever quick-tempered, and jumped lightly from emotion to emotion. But on this abrupt disparting of the curtains the figure of the girl was disclosed, where she reclined in a deep chair, and wearing a look of care and weariness. The conspirators leaped to their feet, and cried out—

“Who is this?” asked West.

Cherwell started a little at the exclamation ; and then coming back to the recess, put out his arm.

“Mistress,” said he, “I have kept you waiting an infamous time. We must e’en pick our way out of this rogues’ nest for ourselves.”

Rumsey ran to the door and put his back against it, drawing his sword, and the others in the room also prepared their weapons.

“You do not leave here,” said Rumsey ; “we have some work before us ere you leave here.”

“’Tis no wonder,” said West with his sly tongue, “that my lord spoke with such sympathy of spies.”

But at these words their anger broke into wild frenzy, and Rumbold and Goodenough rushed upon him.

My lord drew his point through the shoulder of the latter, and was turning his attention to the other, when Grimshaw ran between them, holding up his hands.

“Sirs, I pray you have prudence,” said he very earnestly ; “you know not upon what risks you may stand. And as for this business,” he added, looking towards Rumbold ; “my lord Cherwell’s name and reputation should be known to all, nor should his denial provoke any man, given under his honour.”

“What proof have we that he does not betray us ?” growled Rumsey.

“Fie, fie on you,” said Grimshaw reproachfully ; “you that can look on his lordship and ask that ! It is an embittered cruel question. There should be no doubt upon his lordship.”

“Nor the lady ?” says West with a grimace.

Grimshaw glanced towards the girl with a most dignified rejoinder upon his tongue, as was perceived ;

but of a sudden he opened his mouth, and his face betrayed a wonder. He uttered an exclamation, but, recovering himself, made answer—

“The lady is in my lord’s charge, and that suffices,” said he with a bow.

Cherwell put up his sword with a little laugh.

“’Tis well, sir,” said he, “you use me very gently and very properly. You have spoken justly of this lady, and with truth of myself. And now if you will persuade these gentlemen to give me room I will interrupt you no longer,” and once more he moved towards the door, with Grimshaw very civil by his side, and the rest of them dumb and sullen. Now the door by which my lord was to depart, by the direction of Grimshaw, lay across the chamber, and upon the further side from the alcove, so that in his passage he came by Fergus, the assassin, who was still seated undisturbed at the table, and was guzzling his wine. My lord passed him without more than a glance, but he felt the girl’s arm quake of a sudden in his, and turning, found her staring on the fellow with some terror in her gaze, and a face that was drawn and whitened.

“What is it, mistress?” he asked in a whisper. “Pray never heed him; there be many such as he in need of a rope this day.” This he said, supposing her to have recognized the man as he himself had done. But she gathered up her spirit, and, controlling herself, passed by, and the two went out of the room together without further parley. It was by now very late, yet Cherwell led her by the fields towards Westminster, where Lady Ellicott lay, so as to avoid any suspicions or rumours in case of an encounter. At the gates he parted with her.

“Get you in forthwith, young madam,” he said, “and,

faith, I'll teach my lady how not to lose you for the future. And if ever she does, why she shall answer to me,"—a strange saying, idle as it was, in the light of what afterwards befell.

My lord turned from the place and was walking towards Charing Cross, when, at a little distance, he spied some one through the darkness that had a familiar appearance.

The man, which was but a figure in the night, hastened forward when Cherwell came to a stop, and he had a furtive gait.

"By heaven," thought Cherwell, "I know that walk," and moving round an angle of the house he waited in the blackness. Presently after the man passed, tarried a little considering, and then retraced his way towards the house. As he drew nearer Cherwell could make out more clearly the form and fashion of the man, and he knew him then for the man Fargus. While he was pondering on this, he was aware of a second body that broke out of the darkness, and by the aid of a light in the house he discovered this also. It was Grimshaw. Cherwell was much taken aback at this, but as he still watched, the two men joined and stood in conversation. Supposing himself to be followed, and for no good purpose, my lord would have stepped out and confronted them at once, but he was arrested by the next acts of the men. It was evident now that they were not pursuing him, for, after a few minutes, the fellow Grimshaw approached Lady Ellicott's house and made a knock upon the door very quietly. Soon afterwards he was admitted, and Fargus slunk away. As for my lord he went back to his tavern, mightily perplexed, and wondering upon this remarkable visit, and what it should signify.

## CHAPTER V

### HOW MY LORD SUPPED WITH HIS HIGHNESS

IF I have properly anatomized the man, as he was, in all that native waywardness and impetuosity, you will credit that the matter of this girl passed very soon from his mind. He was little troubled of her, seeing she was fast in bed and secure long ere he himself lay asleep. And, moreover, the promise of fresh temptations enticed him strongly ; so that on the morrow he set forth for Whitehall very gaily and with the most beaming audacity. 'Twas not audacity indeed, but rather indifference, for I have never yet seen any man that was more careless of his behaviour even before princes. Yet I have no doubt but these new chances at the Court allured him. He was fond of the King with a strange fondness, and though he had been absent for years, and that in disgrace, he showed no marks of that knowledge upon him, nor expected that any man should see them. The King was then in a quandary like many another from which he had crept through his amiable cunning ; for what between his fear of the Protestant parties, and the plots that were whispered, and his fealty to his brother, he was scarce able to direct himself among the currents. But most of all he clung to

France, which all men pronounced evil in him ; and while he encouraged the Duke, he was obstinately silent before all other voices. To his Majesty in such a mood, and displaying on account of it, a most unnatural choler, there comes my lord on that day, as easy as though he had but parted from the Court overnight and upon excellent terms. It is said that he was met in the ante-chamber by Lord Hallifax, who asked him bluntly what he did there ; and that Cherwell was equal to him.

“I am come here,” says he, smiling into the other’s face, “because I have heard the King requires an honest man, my lord.”

“What ! From the Hague !” sneered Hallifax.

“Aye,” says Cherwell, looking on him. “For you must understand, my lord, that his Majesty is in such hands that he has cause to trust his honest enemies before his false friends.”

“Then you are an enemy, my lord. You are very frank,” says Hallifax, controlling his fury.

“Oh no,” said my lord with a tiny laugh ; “I am the false friend, be certain. Set me down as that false friend, for I’ll wager that his Majesty will be tickled by so strange a creature upon his threshold. He is used to such warmth and such truth,” and, still laughing, he passed away to seek the King.

He was soon recognized by several, and the report of his return spread quickly, so that there was curiosity to observe his demeanour and how he should be treated. Most held aloof, or gave him scanty looks, yet the boldness and assurance of his manner made people doubt. It was not until he approached the King that they might discover with what eyes he should be received ; and then

indeed it was plain enough. Charles, who was surrounded in a group, of which one was Jermyn, my lord's old acquaintance (and there were also some ladies of the Court), let his gaze fall upon Cherwell as he advanced, making a deep bow. He made no sign at all, but watched him out of his soft expressionless eyes, as if he were contemplating nothing; then, turning his head slightly, made a jest in a low voice to one of the ladies by him. It was then that those present discovered in a flash how he would entreat my lord, and saw beyond doubt that the Earl's fortunes were over. Yet they were destined to an instant surprise, and most of them, no doubt, to a strange disappointment.

My lord took the rebuff with not even a flush of his cheeks, standing before the King, as proud and stiff as any Stewart might. But there was a brighter look in his eyes, and his voice was quicker than was his wont.

"Sire," says he, "your Majesty does not remember me."

"I have a bad memory for faces, sir," says the King, "but a good one for reputations."

"I am of no reputation, sire," says my lord in a clear loud voice. "But I am the Earl of Cherwell, and your Majesty's humble subject."

The King turned to one that was beside him. "Have I an Earl of Cherwell?" he asked.

"Your Majesty owns none such," says this man, "but the Prince of Orange, maybe, is in another case."

"You hear," said Charles, looking coldly on my lord.

My lord took his sword from its scabbard now with a little colour in his face, and set it gently on the floor before him.

“It is not meet,” said he, “for a subject to show a bare weapon in his sovereign’s face. But it seems that I am none. Your Majesty shall determine,” and he looked at the King with a glittering eye.

The King cast a glance askance at him and bit his lip as he turned to the others.

“It is treason,” said the man that had spoken before, who was none less than Lord Sunderland; and at the sound of that word there was a movement in the party.

“What would you have us do?” asked Charles, paying no heed to this, but bending his brows on Cherwell.

“If I am no subject of your Majesty’s,” says he, “and have, therefore, no subject’s right of access to your presence, here is a weapon that your Majesty should break, as that of an enemy. I would see your Majesty’s heel upon it.”

The King’s face changed. “Here is a new Petition of Rights,” says he to Sunderland, and then, for he had ever a liking for Cherwell, “my lord, we are too comfortable when we sit to venture forth a foot,” says he, “and now that I come to look closer on you there is a mad significance in your eye that I remember. You must forgive us, my lord, but you are turned of an orange hue, which I mistook, and, faith,” he added with a smile, “take up your sword, for you shall need it soon, I have no doubt.”

Whereupon my lord stooped suddenly, and ere ever one was aware of his act, had broken the steel with a strong jerk across his knee. “Nay, I shall need not that, sire,” said he; “’twas forged out of England, and was not tempered to your Majesty.”

At which reply the King laughed in good humour. “You should have kept that sword for James, then,”



said he lightly. "For perchance it was wrought for him, whence you come."

But my lord broke then into the merry mad humour that was constant with him.

"I need no sword for my errand here," says he, "for I am come only to deliver your Majesty from my lord Sunderland."

"God forbid," said Charles with a grimace, while Sunderland looked sour. "If I were in your hands, Tony, I should be in the Tower ere a twelvemonth," for this was the style in which he had been used to address my lord in his most familiar passages.

That appellation was enough for those in the neighbourhood, who plainly now perceived that events had taken a course contrary to their expectations. Instead of cold glances, Cherwell was now warmly welcomed; the news went about; and there was none in the Palace that did not press upon him his devoirs, or recall some former friendly communion to his mind. But Cherwell took it all as he had taken the disfavour of the King and those distant and haughty looks of the Court. He cared not a rap for any man of such time-servers; 'twas not in his nature, what faults soever lay there, to be exposed with the work of time. He proceeded about the rooms very gaily, yet not as one conscious of a victory, and then, remembering his mission to Russell, was taking his departure when he spied a figure that he knew, passing by with a woman in close talk. This was Talbot, afterwards the Duke of Tyrconnel, who was attached to the Duke of York, and was indifferently zealous in his master's service. My lord came to a pause, for he was well acquainted with Talbot; and next his eyes were drawn by

the woman, and he started to recognize in her none other than the slim maid of his nocturnal adventure. She wore a brodered waistcoat, and seemed to him of a haughty bearing, which surprised him, as she had been meek enough overnight. She carried her head high like a proper lady of the Court, and he now perceived by the daylight that she was of a greater beauty than he had supposed. She had sweet and just features, delicately lighted, and full abashing eyes, that glowed and trembled. Yet Cherwell noticed that while she delivered upon her companion a proud and angry gaze, she was still very timorous, and there was a pale shadow of fear upon her face. 'Twas then that she saw him, and something leapt into her eyes. He made a step to her, questioning of her mutely, and Talbot turned and greeted him, offering him a ready welcome.

"I find you are in distress, mistress," said Cherwell, paying him no heed, and speaking very curtly, for he recognized in an instant that there was some mischief.

"Faith, you are not too ceremonious, my lord," said Talbot easily.

"Sir," says Cherwell, "I must speak with this lady, who is, as you very well see, embarrassed by your presence."

"The Devil!" cried Talbot, but making no movement. "I see nothing of the kind, and if it be so, the lady has a tongue and can give me my despatch."

Cherwell looked at her, inviting her with an impatient gesture to dismiss the other. But instead her face flushed and her eyes fell, and she stood with a trembling bosom. "I think that 'tis not from me that the confusion comes," said Talbot with a smile. "But rather you, my lord."

“You say truly,” said Cherwell quickly, “I have misjudged, and I crave your pardon,” and with a bow he turned sharply round.

As for the girl she started, delivered a timid glance upon him instantly, and would have stepped forward as though to arrest him; yet paused, ere the action was complete, and moved softly away. The two men were left thus together, and Talbot spoke first, laughing a little.

“You know this little Ellicott madam?” says he. “Sure, my lord, you move with rapid steps to carry so far in a day. Your lordship arrived last night, is it not so?”

“Aye,” said Cherwell.

“You are forestalled, my lord,” said Talbot, smiling.

“Forestalled?” echoed Cherwell, frowning.

“She is not for you, this little cockatrice,” says Talbot, “nay, nor for me neither,” says he with a whimsical look of chagrin.

“Whom is she for?” asked Cherwell with his customary quickness.

Talbot pulled up his shoulders. “There have been many such as she,” he made answer, “and some of a better beauty. But I grant you she has a great freshness; her looks are perfumed, and she has a delicate colour. ’Tis said she must have a place among the Duchess’s women. Indeed she smells very sweet.”

“The Duchess!” said Cherwell. “That were to suppose something further.”

“We shall have no leave from his Highness to suppose anything,” quoth Talbot, laughing, “yet we have the wit to be silent. I commiserate you, my lord. ’Tis a pretty piquant wench, and, no doubt, knows her business.”

“I will never believe it,” said my lord sharply.

“Oh well,” says Talbot, and made no further reply. Cherwell turned away and abruptly left him, for into his mind had come anew the facts of that past night, and the puzzle of the girl’s behaviour. If Talbot said truly she was of a piece with the rest of the Court, and, though he had denied it on the impulse, there was no reason in his denial. Yet, inasmuch as he was ever speedy in act, and moved by zealous thoughts, he remembered the toil in which this young pretty had been cast, and was full of anger with her step-mother. So that, considering if the girl were there, so also should be the dame, he pushed about the Palace, and was rewarded, sure enough, for his pursuit by the sight of Lady Ellicott in one of the large rooms conversing privately with the Duke himself. This was the first time that Cherwell and his Highness had met for several years, but the Duke recognized him and civilly encountered him. Lady Ellicott looked on him with warm glances, and altogether it might have seemed that he was a prodigal that had long delayed to return, but was still the more welcome. But Cherwell put the greetings aside, and making his offices to the Duke, said he—

“Madam, you have a pretty daughter.”

“By the grace of God, ’tis none of mine,” said she in her high voice.

“I remember her,” said Cherwell, nodding. “I have seen her at Dulsiebridge, when we cut an odd figure, you and I.” His Highness looked from one to the other, but my lady turned red, and laughed.

“You should have a care of her,” said Cherwell.

“Faith,” she said sharply, “would you learn me my duty to the child?”

“I would have you remember it,” said Cherwell, getting angry.

“Is this a suitor to the lady’s hand?” asked the Duke.

“No,” says my lord, “I drag no young miss into my fortunes. But this I know, that last night she was fortuitously exposed to danger, and but for my intervention had been the victim of some scoundrels, when she should have been under my lady’s eye.”

“Fie,” said she; “I cannot have her at my apron.”

“’Tis a disgrace,” said Cherwell, “to neglect a maid so.”

“Come,” said the Duke amiably, “I will not interfere in a matter of domesticity,” and he moved away.

“What is this?” cried the lady in a rage. “You dare take me to task thus before his Highness! What authority have you upon me?”

“None, save to step between one and the consequences of your rashness,” he answered bluntly, for something in her attitude angered him.

She cast him a glance, and changed with the next words.

“Oh, spare me your reproaches,” she cried languishing. “I have ever been for ease, and the chit interests me not. She has not the wit of a louse to find her way about. How will she get her a husband, d’ye think, with such a head on her?”

“She will get no husband,” said he, “if she smirch herself.”

“You are grown mighty puritanical,” said the lady gaily, “I should not have recognized you, my lord. This is a sour face you wear to me. Come, let us be friends. I have a house by Westminster, as you may

remember, and maybe your feet can carry you to that door again."

"They should find the way of their own wit, and all against my will, I doubt not, madam," said Cherwell, smiling; with which they parted, each in a pleasanter spirit.

But there was my lord Russell's business before Cherwell, and he must strain himself to hold back that amiable nobleman from his ruin. He had brought messages, as I have said, from Shaftesbury, and these he rendered to Russell, adding thereto his own mind on the matter.

"He is dying," said he, "and will be no longer a two-edged sword among the nations. Yet I bear witness to him for a great and variable man. If you count upon him, my lord, you will count upon the dead."

My lord Russell said slowly that he counted only upon what righteousness soever a cause should have, and upon the hearts and fidelity of its adherents. Upon that Cherwell broke out, "Aye, there it is—I like not the man, and I mistrust that smiling Howard."

"He is cousin-german to me," said Lord Russell sadly, "yet I suffer your words."

"Pooh," says Cherwell, laughing. "I would as lief run my full cousin to the heart as any huff in England," which, if you consider, was not very kindly in him.

This affair of the plot, if plot it might be termed, which was mere hope and oftener despair, kept Cherwell employed during the next day, and he supped with Lords Russell and Essex that night. It was not until he came forth into the street alone pretty late that he thought of Lady Ellicott, and the words in which she had invited

him. The hour was past ten, yet, never doubting of his welcome, he made through that darkness for the house by the Park in Westminster. As he came up to the doorway his eyes fell with remembrance upon some figure that left the stairs before him, and there flashed upon him in a return the face of the conspirator, Grimshaw. Yet whether it was Grimshaw or not, the recollection started in him a course of thought, and fetched him up with a great jarring; so that he stood for some moments, considering with himself upon the threshold.

But when he was received inside he was amazed so deeply that he forgot these thoughts; for the man that admitted him seemed to expect his coming, and he was taken into a fine room set for a feast, and broad with lights. But here the fellow suddenly gaped at him, and, showing an uncomfortable surprise, stuttered out first that his mistress was abed, and upon Cherwell's opening his eyes at the table, that she was out, and would not yet return.

"Oh," says my lord cheerfully, sitting down, "then I will wait very patiently for her in this company, I assure you."

The man withdrew at that, very much embarrassed, and Cherwell was left to add up his own reflections together. And first this was plain, that he was not wanted at all, whereas there was some one more fortunate to arrive. This conjecture tickled him not a little, and (for he had known my lady well) he was resolved to stay and put a jest on her. But while he was still in these light considerations there was a soft footstep from the room beyond, and, the tapestry being thrust aside,

the face of the girl, my lady's step-daughter, emerged upon him. She stood, a tall figure, very slight and silent, the colour springing in a spot upon each pale cheek, but her eyes shining and her young body shaken with her breathing. It was so she stood grasping the dull grey hangings of the high room, apparelled in white, as for some great occasion. My lord bowed low, gazing on her with admiring eyes, but she, paying no heed, advanced and put her hand on his arm with a quick motion.

"My lord," she whispered rapidly, "I owe you twice already a deep debt. You seem predestined for my preserver. Yet I would not ask this if I had other help available. But you come in the nick of time. You save me. I accept the omen. I pray you, my lord, that you will sup with my lady here this night."

Cherwell looked on her astonished, and then to the table, where all the preparations for a delicate supper were made.

"If my lady shall be so good as to give me the hospitality," said he at last, still looking at her, "I would sup with her with great delight; and if my lady hath a press of other matters, why it may be that I should as justly sit here, your guest, young mistress."

"Yea; my guest, my guest," she said, warm now with her excitement, and nodding and nodding. Before other words might pass, or Cherwell might understand further, Lady Ellicott entered with a noise of skirts, and came to a pause, looking out of her handsome, painted eyes.

"'Tis you," she said sharply, and bending her brows on them.



“Madam,” said Cherwell, “I have taken your generosity by surprise.”

“That is true indeed,” said she tartly, and glancing towards the girl. “I see that Alethea has been entertaining you. Take ye care, miss, of your reputation, as this gentleman himself can give you warning.”

“Madam,” said he, “in your hands or mine her reputation is beyond cavil.”

She laughed shrilly at that. “If you put us on a level,” she said, “I should be ungracious to deny your claim, knowing what I know.”

“I know nothing,” he answered, “save that here is a very plentiful feast prepared for old friends.”

That brought her to herself again, and she made a silence, presently resuming in a new mood—

“Well, well, my lord, your tongue will always be running.”

“And my appetite too,” said he, smiling.

“Nay, nay,” she cried, “you had never the stomach of a fly. But since you speak so bravely you shall sup me at the market this night, when the play is over. His Majesty will be there.”

Cherwell made a bow. “I have a fancy for these viands,” he said whimsically, waving a hand at the table.

“These are not for you, my friend,” she replied lightly, “but for a discourse of idle misses, like Alethea here.”

Cherwell sat down. “Mistress Alethea shall bid me welcome then,” said he; “for here I sit, and I beg that she extend the invitation to us both.”

The lady grew angry, as was plain in her face. She

tossed her head. "I will not have you here," she cried shrilly.

"Indeed, madam," said the girl, stepping forward, and speaking with a flutter. "But I have already invited my lord." Lady Ellicott surveyed her, with her mouth shut sharply, and glances passed between them, on the one side threatening, but upon the other timorous and steadfast. There was plainly some outbreak to follow, but ere it could ensue the door was opened and a man entered the room quietly.

Cherwell fell back a step in his surprise. It was the Duke of York.

With that appearance the position began to assume a new front for my lord; in his quick way he put facts together; and, though he was still far from the bottom of the mystery, he perceived very clearly what his course should be. He remembered Talbot's saying, and at what it hinted; and thus, bearing the Duke no good-will from the first, he looked at him now antagonistically. His Highness was ill pleased to find some one there, and showed his impatience in his first glance; so that they all were greatly deranged save Cherwell. He it was that spoke, offering the Duke his welcome.

"I am bold enough to speak, sir, for this lady that has lost her tongue," he said, most impudent, "and to greet your Highness with this small ceremony. We are to be set, it seems, with a parcel of misses, for the which I profess an inordinate esteem, but little affection. I know not your Highness's tastes."

The Duke smiled, his mouth relaxing as though he considered to himself that there was no great difficulty here, and that his suspicions had been at fault. He took

my lord for one deep in drink, as he might well have been seeing the hour was so late ; and so he made answer affably enough.

“ One miss should suffice you, my lord,” he said. “ For myself I am grown old enough to prefer a madam.”

Says Cherwell quickly, “ Nay, all your misses are madams,<sup>1</sup> your Highness,” and laughed merrily, at which the Duke smiled very sourly.

Lady Ellicott, seeing the turn that events were taking, grew more amiable, and beamed upon Cherwell ; striving to draw him into a passage of arms. But it was all in vain. He fenced with her, sure enough, but back he would come to the Duke with his sallies and his sharp tongue, as obstinate as a man might be. Among other things, and chief of his offences, he feigned to suppose the Duke was come for Lady Ellicott, and took possession himself of Mistress Alethea debonairly. He made it appear that he was acting very discreetly towards his Highness in removing the maid, and conducted himself at the supper in a most hilarious manner, till my lady cried out with impatience on him, and the Duke whispered to her with a black face. But all the while the girl sate with her head averted, or gazing into her plate, her colour changing, and sighing a little at times. She was grave as a statue, paying no heed either to Cherwell or his Highness. Thus did this uncomfortable supper proceed, with those three uneasy persons, and my lord playing his part

<sup>1</sup> This small jest of Lord Cherwell's had reference to a double signification of the words “miss” and “madam” in those days. In one sense “miss” was used of a young girl, but not yet as a prefix to the name, and “madam” of an adult woman, but there was a less complimentary meaning to both words.—ED.

with huge enjoyment, until presently the Duke lost patience, and he rose.

“Your tongue wags away, my lord,” said he sharply. “You would make a poor conspirator, I think.”

My lord came to a pause, and glanced from beneath his brows at him.

“My voice,” says he in a slower way, “is more dangerous than another man’s silence, your Highness.”

The Duke winced, for he must have had a suspicion that there was more in this night than he had fancied. He bowed.

“Then what a peril must lie in your silence!” he sneered.

“My silence, sir,” says Cherwell, flashing his violet eyes on him, for it ran into his whimsical brain that he was hereby challenged,—“My silence, sir, is not perilous but fatal.”

“Captain Bobadil, Captain Bobadil!” murmured the Duke with a smile, and indeed my lord had been betrayed into a foolish temper, and his Highness had the better of him, which sent off the one in a renewed good-humour. But when the door was closed on him my lady turned to her step-daughter.

“Get ye to bed,” she cried angrily, and, the girl being gone without a word, she fell upon Cherwell like a fish-wife, calling him frankly a damnable marplot, and abusing him with many ugly terms.

Cherwell waited until her breath was out, smiling gently at her.

“It seems,” says he, “that we are all become conspirators now, and I have spoiled some sport.”

“Out of devilishness, out of wantonness!” she cried.

“You would make the child her Highness’s woman?” he asked.

“I take thought for her future,” she answered, watching him suspiciously.

“Aye,” he said, “you would raise her very high, as I see. You are a pearl of mothers to her, and disregard yourself.”

She tapped her fan impatiently upon her knee, and said she sullenly, “My lord, you will observe that you have outstayed your welcome.”

“My hostess being gone to bed,” he answered, rising. “You are very right.”

He walked to the door with a bow, and she followed him, putting a hand on his sleeve.

“You have done me an injury,” she said angrily, “and I will not pardon you for it.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “I am a clumsy fellow,” he said.

“What profit have you in this frustration?” asked Lady Ellicott more pleasantly. “’Tis but a whim that cankers in your head. You aim at nothing.”

He laughed a little at that, for in truth he knew not why he had interfered in this business.

“Go, run away,” she went on with an echo of his laugh, and tapping him gently with her fan. “You have been rogue enough for a night.”

“I will cross you yet,” said he gaily, and got forth into the night, smiling cheerfully, and in a very contented mind.

He entered the park by the great gates, and, as he did so, a figure stole out of the shadows and ran across to him. He paused.

“Who is this?” he asked sharply.

“’Tis I,” said a voice that he knew. “’Tis Alethea Ellicott.”

“Mistress, you are late afield,” said Cherwell, wondering.

“I have something to say; I would talk a little with you, my lord,” said she quickly.

He led the way into the park, and they came into a place of trees near by where the King was used to wander. Here he stopped, and looked into her face, which was faintly visible in the starlight.

“Now,” says my lord. “What is this mystery?”

## CHAPTER VI

### WHY MY LADY ELLICOTT PUT OFF HER JOURNEY

“MY lord,” said she in a soft and distant voice that she ever had, “my lord, I am still a trouble dragging on your heels. ’Tis you that have saved me !”

“What piece of a play have we here ?” said Cherwell lightly.

“’Tis no play,” she cried, “but a very cruel story.”

“You are misused ?” said he.

“I would ask you to believe that,” she cried. “Were there any help for me out of my friends and neighbours should I stand here, begging of your pity ? It is by that desperate act you shall measure my straits.”

“You shall beg no pity in vain,” cried my lord quickly. “Come ; Lady Ellicott destines you for a place you like not.”

“She uses me abominably, me that am my father’s child,” said she.

“And yet,” said Cherwell, “’tis a place of honour, as they say, to be lady to the Duchess.”

She started, and her voice rang a little hard. “My lord, let me not mince this matter with you. We shall not mistake for the lack of plain words together. But ’tis

for you to give me audience. I will cease prating if you are weary, and care no more to hear a heart-sick girl."

"Nay, nay," he said, "speak on."

"I have the honour to please the Duke," said she, her voice breaking with her anger and her tears. "'Tis to be his mistress that is the privilege to which they urge me. He hath set his eyes on me with favour, and I am his handmaiden to be beat or broken, evilly entreated or loaded with toys."

"'Tis Lady Ellicott that presses you?" asked Cherwell.

"'Tis she," cried the girl, "'tis she and no other—she that should have stood between me and these affronts. My father raised her to his bed, and for long years he suffered her gently. An ill wife she was to him, my lord; yet how does she now repay upon the daughter what offices she denied also to the father? Look you; she would push me to be an evil woman, and see me wanton. "'Tis an honour," she cries, 'and there is not one in these realms but would gladly undertake it.' Nay, but there is one, and that one here," and she set her restless hands upon her bosom.

"My lord," she said, clearly, "I do desire you to do me this right. In your eyes there is, it may be, no dishonour thus. Believe me different, for I am an Ellicott, and no trinket for princes to wear and discard. The King hath many friends, they say, among the ladies of the Court; I will not grudge that his brother also should have. But not I—not I—I that am but a girl, my lord, and am so importuned daily to my shame."

She ceased from her quick and trembling speech, and Cherwell stood silent for a time. He had seen overmuch



of Courts and fine ladies, yet these phrases were full of sincerity, and he saw that she was rebellious against the fortune that was promised her. He heard the ring of truth, and said he presently, "You were better out of London town, madam, and clear of these Courts."

"Aye, I distaste them," she said vehemently. "Indeed, but I could love the town and the gaiety, but I must wed the country ; there is no other refuge left me."

"What !" he said, "where are your friends ?"

"My friends are they that would drive me on, my lord," she answered. "My father is dead—'tis five years gone ; and I am in the charge of Lady Ellicott. There is no help that I can call to me. I may not shield myself with any buckler. I have held my peace. It ill becomes one of my father's blood to publish thus the humiliation in which she lives. Think on it, my lord. There is why I have uttered no word till now ; but I am broken," she cried. "I have endured too much ; I totter upon the verge, and there are no hands but yours to help me."

"I will help thee, child," said Cherwell softly ; and then, "why doth she press this upon you ?"

The girl shook her head. "I know not ; she deems it an honour. But also she is of a seething ambition. She is my mistress till I marry."

"Marry !" said he ; "why then she holds your fortune."

"She is my guardian by my father's will," said she.

Cherwell uttered a cry, for he was impatient to hear of such base selfishness.

"But what then does she practise upon you to serve her ends ?" he asked.

"My lord, there are shameful things, and not to be spoken," she replied in a lower voice. "His Highness was

come to-night. Yea, but there is worse. I was discarded in the streets that night, I that am helpless."

"What! Of a set purpose was this done?" he asked in his amazement.

"'Twas so, as I believe," she answered, "and I was pursued by men. Why, my lord, d'ye suppose that those five fellows sought me out? I pray I do none a wrong, but I have been persecuted in divers ways, and here also I see the hand of my lady."

"The foul woman, the evil woman!" he repeated in a low voice.

"I stand, my lord, in this dangerous case," she went on piteously, "and now here I lay all the pride of my house before your feet."

"There shall none molest you again," cried my lord angrily.

"To-morrow they would take me into the country," she said.

"'Tis well; you would be safer there," he interposed.

"Yes, an it were for safety I was to be taken, I should indeed be safer so," she answered; "but 'tis a part of their plot to undo me. My maid has learned their machinations to-night, and 'twas that drove me out to find you. My lord, they carry me from the town to-morrow evening. 'Tis arranged how they will proceed. My lady will set forth with me and her attendants for Somersetshire, but it is not Somersetshire that we shall reach. No, but our destination will be some place I know not where!"

"A house of the Duke!" he cried.

She made no answer, but suddenly, cowering, pressed against him with her arms about his shoulder.

“Who is that?” she cried. “Save me from him. My lord, keep me from him.”

My lord was aware then of a blacker shadow that passed between the trees, and against the twilight. It moved, lurched forward, and flitted into the night, and as the figure vanished he recalled it. 'Twas that of the lean shambling murderer, Fergus. He turned to the girl that hung on him.

“What is it?” he asked. “This knave shall not harm you.”

“'Twas he,” she whispered, “'twas he that led the scoundrels on that night.”

“What!” cried my lord, and drawing his sword.

But indeed the man had gone, and there was no chance to find him in the darkness. He put up the weapon slowly.

“I begin to see,” says he softly, “I begin to see more than I had thought.” He led her gently from the Park. “I will conduct you to your house,” he said, and they exchanged no further words until he had set her before Lady Ellicott's door. Here he paused.

“Have no fear, mistress,” he said. “None shall trouble you further. They shall find you harder for abduction than appears. But I must have the hour.” She gave it him. It was ten at night. He bade her farewell.

“Maybe, you shall go not forth at all to-morrow,” he said with a laugh, and left her.

My lord had now a pretty clear vision of this plot, for though he was not at all one given to ponder and suspect, yet he came swiftly to conclusions, and sometimes erroneously, but oftener with a wonderful correctness. There

was here but another example of the habit that was well known of the Duke, who was, in truth, a more reckless lover than his brother, though he hid it all under a semblance of propriety and religion. These young eyes had drawn his Highness, and the more he was resisted the further he pressed. It appeared a shame unto Cherwell that a young gentlewoman of such descent should be so persecuted, and the news fanned the heat of his blood against the Duke and that woman, Lady Ellicott. He was resolved to hinder them, even if there should be no other to come to his assistance, and this temper of his must have been suspected by one or the other of his antagonists. They knew him, both of them, and had such an assurance of his recklessness that it was deemed best to detach him. How much was known to my Lady Ellicott of the talk in the Park I cannot say, but the man Fergus was not there for nothing, and it is certain that he carried back a report. This news, we must suppose, reaches the Duke, and sets him frowning, so that Talbot is chosen to intervene between the parties.

Talbot called at the hostelry where my lord and his man lay the next afternoon, and offered an invitation to sup. He was a cordial man and Cherwell liked him well enough, so that he gladly accepted the hospitality, and they sat together with two gentlemen of the Court at a place called "The Pigeons." When supper was gone Talbot was for dicing, and my lord did not refuse him, nor the others, and during the course of the play a vast amount of wine was drunk, and some French brandy.

Says my lord to Ravel, his man, before he set forth—  
"Call me before ten of the clock, for I have business."

But after supper he had forgot this, and what with the gaming was pleasantly engaged, so that Ravel, having pushed his way in to him, found him mightily taken up, and impatient of the interruption.

“What is it, rogue?” said he.

“My lord, you have business,” said Ravel.

“Business! That he hath,” cried Talbot, who had drunk very deep. “He has the business to give me my revenge this night.”

“Away!” says Cherwell, laughing. “D’ye hear? I need no reminder of what is due from me.”

But Ravel kept his place, importuning him civilly.

“’Twas your lordship’s orders,” he said.

“Shall his lordship give orders to himself?” asked one of the others. “Then he is a braver man than most.”

But Cherwell suddenly came to himself despite the liquor he carried.

“I vow the rascal speaks truly,” he said, and threw down the dice.

“Fie!” cried Talbot, “you forget yourself, my lord Cherwell.”

“Nay,” says Cherwell shortly, “I have remembered myself, and I wish you good evening.”

Talbot sprang to the door noisily. “You shall not go forth,” said he, “till I have plucked you bare.”

My lord grinned. “You shall pluck me to-morrow,” he answered.

“Tony, Tony,” said Talbot, wagging his head, “if I have to fight you, you shall keep this company to-night.”

“Aye,” said Cherwell, “I see you have your orders,” for of a sudden the understanding of the plot came to him.

“Orders !” cried Talbot in a fury.

“Your master commands,” said Cherwell ; “but he commands not me.”

“’Sdeath !” cried the other, “you shall bleed for this,” and would have flung himself on my lord. But the others interfered.

“We will have no quarrel here,” they said, and bade Talbot put up his weapon.

“I will fight him now !” he screamed in his rage.

“Give me a glass,” says my lord, very cool, and receiving a pint of wine, tossed it off, and with his eyes flashing on Talbot, threw the dregs in his face.

“That will serve to keep you cold,” he said coolly ; “you shall bubble over to-morrow,” and, buckling up his sword, marched to the door.

Upon that Talbot fell into a passion liker to that of a devil than a man, and drew his weapon again, crying out what he would accomplish, whereat the others, seeing things were run so far, gave up and stood aside. But indeed the man was in no state for passadoes, as my lord very soon proved, for ere a dozen exchanges had been made his weapon was flying, and he himself straddled upon the floor. At which Cherwell put up his sword.

“’Tis not seemly to draw on such as this,” he said, pointing at Talbot. “But he would have it.”

Talbot swore an oath, and crawled to the door where he strove to get upon his legs.

“Come, sir,” said Cherwell, looking on one of the gentlemen, “I may not lay my hands on him, as you perceive.”

He that was addressed stepped forward and pulled Talbot aside from the door.

“Go your way, my lord,” said he; “but you will doubtless hear of this on the morrow.”

“I ask no better,” says Cherwell, and saying no more, went out.

When he was got into the street the sharp air raised in him quickly the fumes of the wine, and he strode like one dazed, feeling for the first time the due effects of the liquor.

“Why fetched you me out, rascal?” said he to Ravel.

“My lord, it was your orders that you had business,” said he.

“Business!” quoth my lord, and stared, bemused, at the lights.

“What’s o’clock?” he asked.

“’Tis on the stroke of ten,” says Ravel, and at that word the bells began.

“By God!” said Cherwell, and drawing his sword again he fell to running in a mad fashion down by Whitehall, with his naked blade before him. Ravel followed after him, and thus they came at a great speed to Lady Ellicott’s house near the Park. Before the door was drawn up a coach, and (says Ravel) my lord stayed by the side of it, and knocked with his hilt on the window. Then he looked in.

“Who is there here?” he asked loudly, and the face of one peered out at him. This he recognized for Grimshaw, the conspirator, and at the sight of him my lord started.

“’Tis you are in this!” he cried. “Out, out, you little rat!” he called, and seizing him by the neckband flung him forth upon the pavement; which done, he ran

up the steps and knocked noisily upon the door of the house.

In the same instant this was opened and Lady Ellicott issued forth, robed as for a journey, and with a brace of maids behind her.

“Who are you that makes this disturbance?” she asked shrilly. “My men shall trounce you soundly;” and then the light falling on him, she knew who he was. She fell very black of the brows, but my lord stood rocking upon his feet, with his sword in his left hand.

“You shall take no journey to-night, madam,” he said. “I will have you to know that. ’Tis a cold night for such as you, and I have a care for you. You shall go not forth to-night, by God!”

“You will stop me!” cried she angrily.

“I have a care for your ladyship’s health,” he repeated. “’Tis delicate, ’tis very delicate,” and he laughed a little.

Then, says Ravel, Lady Ellicott grew red of the face and made a step at him.

“You are drunken,” she cried. “Stand back, you drunken fool, and let me pass.”

“Drunken,” says my lord solemnly, “I may be, but this blade hath tasted of nothing, and is athirst.”

“You would draw on a woman, ye coward!” she screamed.

“Nay,” says Cherwell, “’tis a woman I defend,” and, swaying about, he peered through the open doorway for sight of the girl Alethea. He saw naught behind but the fluttered wenches and some varlets gathering together at the sounds of that contention.

But Lady Ellicott, seeing that this abuse would serve



no end, turned and called upon them, desiring them to put him forth out of her way. My lord laughed gaily.

“Come Jerry, and Jack, and Will!” he cries.

Suddenly, from where he stood by the coach, Ravel saw a man making his way stealthily up the steps out of the darkness and approaching Cherwell from behind. He called on his master in alarm, bidding him beware; and my lord, twisting about so quickly that he came near falling headlong, arrested the fellow in the act to strike. It was Fargus, as he recognized in the faint light.

“Your good acquaintance, Mr. Murders,” he said lightly, and ran him through the shoulder, so that he fell with a howl of rage and pain into the street.

“You consort well, madam,” says he; “spies and assassins! By heaven, you have a choice palate.”

“You have killed my servant!” she cried furiously, being now taken out of herself.

“Very well,” says he; “but I fear I have assoiled your ladyship’s eyes with blood. Come, close the door and send ’em out to me one by one—nay, all together,” he cried.

“You are he that slew Sir Jacob Janus,” she sneered.

“As I would another that should come on such an errand,” said he.

There was a pause at this, and she, managing to contain her anger, and no doubt contriving other schemes, looked at him more quietly.

“Why do you this?” she asked.

“I have a diligent interest in you,” he replied easily, “and the night is shrewd for a journey.”

Again there was a pause.

“Come in, my lord,” she said next, in a different voice. “Come in, then, and you shall warm yourself otherwise than upon my doorstep.”

He bowed, and putting up his sword, entered the house, vanishing from Ravel’s sight. No sooner was he across the threshold than his gaze alighted upon the girl, Alethea, where she stood in the twilight, regarding him with parted lips and a fuller colour. Lady Ellicott shut to the door.

“I give you a good evening, mistress,” said Cherwell, bowing to the other. “Strip off that cloak, I pray you, for ’tis no weather for maids to be abroad.”

Lady Ellicott turned on him sharply, but she answered nothing, and with a smiling face bade my lord advance to the inner rooms. Here presently were set the three at a table, and before a fire, the lady smiling widely and simpering over wine, but seeming anxious to retain Mistress Alethea’s presence. She laid a bottle upon the board by Cherwell’s arm.

“Said I not I should warm you, my lord?” she went on. “’Tis good for the stomach on a cold night. Of a truth you said well, and stood against me properly. I am too delicate to brave the raw winds, and Miss here is of the same complexion. We will put off this journey to a more favourable occasion. We thank you for your jealous care of us.”

My lord stared at her, giving a little awkward laugh, for he was still fuddled of his wits.

“I have taken the leave to prick holes in a friend of yours,” he said. “There is one, Fargus——”

“What know you of Fargus?” she cried quickly, and showing some consternation.

“I know that he is a rogue,” said Cherwell, “and that he hangs about your ladyship’s house, together with a gnawing rat named Grimshaw. There should be evidence to hang ’em somewhere.”

“Ah,” says Lady Ellicott, “you have met Grimshaw. He is one that advises me in my estates. I know not this Fargus.”

“Sure,” says my lord, “you shall know him not for the future, an I lay my hands on him. Tut, madam ! ’Tis plain what all this signifies, and whose creatures are these.”

She cast a vicious glance on her stepdaughter as upon one that had betrayed her, but controlling herself, laughed pleasantly.

“My lord, you have lost your manners which were once too fine to refuse a lady’s denial. This is a sorry business to ply against me.”

“It is so,” he answered gravely, “and I would ask your pardon. I will accept any words you may offer me, madam ; nay, what you say is Gospel to me,” and then stared at her with a broad smile.

She was not disconcerted by this ironical assent, but laughed again.

“Plenish your glass, my lord,” said she, and would have poured him wine from the bottle.

But my lord raised his hand suddenly, ceasing from his grin, and, with a frowning brow, knocked the bottle from the table, so that it fell, spilling the liquor at his feet. Lady Ellicott started, and her face changed. Quickly she abandoned all these pretences, but she showed no anger, rather a greater coolness.

“’Tis the hour for your bed,” she said harshly to the

girl, who bowed low to my lord, and went. He followed her with his eyes as though deliberating.

“Come, my lord,” said Madam, “you are an ill companion this night. There remains little of that fastidious nobleman that was once a pattern of the Court,” and she looked at the bottle on the floor. He stooped, and lifting the bottle set it upon the table, bottom upwards.

“’Tis a late hour,” said he quickly, “and not one when I am used to be with women.”

“Indeed,” says she dryly, “I have had that same thought myself.”

“You would ask me to go?” he inquired.

“Is not your business done?” she demanded sharply.

He sate awhile silently.

“You will go to bed, madam?” he asked of her presently.

She flamed forth: “I shall go when I will,” she cried. “Heavens! my lord, you have not that right upon me.”

Cherwell rose.

“I ask your pardon,” says he, bowing, “and I wish you a good rest.”

But she rose with him, examining his face curiously.

“Tell me, what is this object at which you aim?” she asked abruptly.

“Madam,” he replied civilly, “it is one, I fear, you would not apprehend.”

“I suppose ’tis honour,” she said, with a sneer, “or is it that your heart is struck?” He made no answer. “For my lord Cherwell to become a spy upon a woman’s actions!” she went on bitterly. “But I tell you that ’tis of no avail. I will do what I list.” Still he offered no reply, and she broke out with impatience—

“Speak, my lord, what will ye gain by this?”

“It seems,” he said, with a smile, “that I shall gain your anger.”

“Nay, I promise you more than that,” she retorted.

“You will not give this up?” he asked, after a pause in which they faced each other mutely.

“Nay, that is the question I would put to you,” she returned. “Will ye stand aside?”

“Madam, ’tis a narrow way,” says he courteously, “and there is no room to pass.”

“Think you?” she exclaimed earnestly. “D’ye know what sort of enmity you will provoke?”

“I have ever had enemies,” he said, regarding her with his stubborn look.

“But none perhaps so active,” she rejoined; “my lord, you would imperil yourself, to embark in this encounter.”

“Why, now you put me in spirit,” he said lightly, “then I shall have my whack at Fergus.”

She threw up her hands. “I warn you, you shall be overwhelmed, my lord,” she said.

“Faith, madam, I like you in the prophetic,” he said easily, “’tis the sort of beauty that serves best the tragical.”

She turned from him.

“I bid you good-night, my lord,” she said, and swept away abruptly.

## CHAPTER VII

### HOW MY LORD MADE AN OFFER AND WAS REFUSED

MY lord Cherwell stood now committed to a private war, and one, as was soon plain, that should be conducted by wicked and clandestine hands. The traitorous devices of that woman, Ellicott, angered him, for all the pleasant face he wore ; and he grew into a very obstinate humour—the more so that he began to see what danger threatened his friends. For the little Grimshaw that he had thrown out of the carriage, together with Fergus and various considerations in his mind, all took shape now into a plot deeper than he had supposed. These fellows were employed by the Duke, and must follow his Highness's commands. He had seen them set to a use in the matter of this girl, Alethea Ellicott ; and it startled him to remember where he had first met the rascals. They were plainly spies of the Duke, and upon that supposition it was easy to see what they did with Lord Howard, Hampden, Rumbold, and the others. Says Cherwell to himself that this discovery meant ruin to one that he esteemed, and he was not long ere he took the news to Lord Russell. But by that time it was too late, and the blow had been delivered.

It is no part of my task here to show forth the history of what has come to be called the Rye House Plot. Indeed the thing has crept into these pages rather by accident, and because of the fortuitous meeting of my lord and the girl by the wine-house. Yet the persons of that infamous espial were by a chance those that pursued the Duke's designs in the more private matter; and so far as there is mention of that Plot here, it will serve to indicate the Duke's methods and the ends he aimed at. Save in the imagination and the wild talk of Rumbold, West, and a few of that kidney, there was no conspiracy at all, and certainly none that was aimed at the Duke's death. The part my lords Russell and Essex, together with Hampden and Sydney, had in it was merely to think it better if the Duke might be superseded by Monmouth or another. Even this desire was but a thought domestic in their minds, or, at the most, debated among themselves privately. There was no talk of action, and it was the treachery of these spies that dragged them wrongfully into the conspiracy, and sent them one by one to the block. Essex, indeed, saved his head by contriving his own end, but the others perished on the scaffold.

Yet through all this turmoil my lord walked secure, and none laid hands upon him. It was known, of course, that he was present at Shepherd's, and no testimony would be lacking against him. Moreover, it might have pleased the Duke thus to deliver himself from one that threatened to become a trouble, and was at no time favourable to him. Nevertheless, my lord passed unharmed, and he attributed this to the influence of the King himself. Charles paid no heed to those that jogged

his elbow, if any jogged him now, and he welcomed Cherwell with unusual warmth ; so that it was remarked by a wit that the man who had fled the Court in a deep disgrace for his association with those that were protecting the King's life, was now honoured for keeping company with those that would destroy it. The truth was that Cherwell cared no whit for all these rumours which ran about the town. The King stood by him, and he was fond of the King ; but he would have recked nothing if his Majesty had thrust him into the Tower along with Russell. So those that knew him best believed, though he said nothing, keeping merely an amiable and smiling countenance, and cracking jokes with others about the court. One day Sunderland was pressing Charles warmly in my lord's presence, and urging him to vigorous acts in punishment of the conspirators. This he did with a sinister look to Cherwell, who stood idly playing with his ruffles.

“What think you, my lord ?” says the King to him.

“Of what, your Majesty ?” he asked. “I open no ears to State secrets.”

“Of this plot,” said Charles, regarding him impassively.

“What plot is there ?” says he.

“Why, a plot to depose a well-meaning man and set a simpleton in his place,” said the King.

“I have heard of no such plot, sire,” says Cherwell firmly, for Russell was then in prison, and he was impatient of the rascally inventions of the informers.

“Oh,” says Charles dryly, “well, I hear a great deal of it,” and then he turns to Sunderland, “No, I will go



no further," he said harshly. "Let James do what he will," and he flung away, showing marks of irritation such as were uncommon with him.

Indeed the King was looking ill at this time, and carried himself with weariness, his dark complexion being turned of a livid white. The Duke it was that was active, and his exertions made the greater part of the nation suspicious. Yet in the matter of his intrigue, and the diabolic arrangement with Lady Ellicott, he did not move. He was, no doubt, swayed by other and deeper considerations at the moment, for the Plot gave him a weapon for use against his enemies. Moreover, a report of that adventure going abroad was quickly current in the town, and soon the whole Court was full of wagging heads. The direction of the Duke's heart was known to all, and now enters this news about Cherwell to spice the story. The particulars of the scandal were repeated, and exaggerated in the repetition into such extravagance that there remained hardly any truth in the gossip. But this was known, that His Highness and my lord were at a difference, and that so far the advantage rested with the latter. In the face of these tales it was not probable that a new attempt would be made presently upon the girl; yet Cherwell had his watch-dogs, and notably his man, Ravel, the most inquisitive lying fellow I ever saw, but showing silence and affection towards his master. There was the less likelihood that the Duke would stir against the girl because of his brother's attitude. Charles befriended Cherwell in this also, though not with explicit intention, for it was said that he rated his Highness on the scandal that was so bruited, telling him plainly that he needed to

husband his popularity, and that what he sought might be found without trespassing in such quarters.

“Your Majesty, it seems, would have me pick a mistress as carefully as a wife,” said the Duke irritably.

“Nay, James,” says the King mildly, “but more carefully, I think,” at which the Duke flushed darkly, remembering how his marriage with Anne Hyde came about.

But whether this story be true or not, it is certain that the Duke did nothing, and his creatures kept their holes. The difference between Talbot and Cherwell was composed without difficulty, and chiefly by the good-humour of the former. Cherwell next day sent to him with the word that he was at his command; but Talbot, shrugging his shoulders, smiled broadly, and says he to Sir William Tarleton, that was the go-between—

“This has rather the look of a challenge, sir. I would beg to know of you out of what eyes my lord Cherwell regards this.”

Upon that Sir William told him that it was to offer every opportunity to himself, should he be aggrieved.

Talbot tore up the letter laughingly, “Not I,” says he. “I went beyond my bottles, and that’s the truth.”

Back goes Sir William carrying this message, and presently returns with the news that the Earl of Cherwell was delighted to hear that Mr. Talbot was drunken overnight, and congratulated him on coming again to a condition when he might use a rapier. At that Talbot frowned, and

“This has an ugly appearance,” he exclaimed; but as Sir William said nothing, he broke out again laughing,

and "No, I'm damned if I do," says he, "and you may tell my lord that I would have had no hand in the game had I known so much as is now public property."

With which sensible rejoinder to the menace, the affair came to a term amiably enough.

But not so another dispute in which this scandal involved him. There was at this time lingering at the Court, the young Marquess of Hammond, the chief of that Irish family, who, being used to scatter his life about the capitals of Europe, had learned many foreign ways and practices, the which, taken with his lively blood, composed of him a pretty strange fellow. He had no bridle upon his tongue, and lived a roystering reckless life, using neither conscience nor decency. Yet by a chance my lord grew to be familiar with him. It is possible that he was drawn by some likeness in them both upon one side. Yet of a truth there was little they had in common; for Cherwell, being quite as easily pricked by impulse and passion, was yet by nature of a more delicate stomach, and held himself very high. Still the two, oddly associated, fell into an intimacy by the favour of certain similarities, so that they came to call each other affectionately. But as it happened, this Hammond spoke when others were silent, as was wiser in them; and he openly rallied Cherwell upon the girl he had defended, adding some malodorous jests to season his talk. Upon this, my lord, who was in a choleric mood, turned, and, lifting his hand, struck him softly upon the mouth.

"My lord," he says, "there is a time when 'tis well that you should constrain that bray of yours."

"What the devil mean you?" cried the Marquess, lugging at his sword, but not yet understanding if this was

a joke. My lord nodded to the others. "My friends keep silence, as do those that love me not, but for another reason. Indeed, I care not in which category you place yourself, but by God, you shall hold your tongue," and here he was broken forth at last, flashing his eyes upon Hammond.

The Irishman spluttered and drew, and there was no course possible now save to fight. The meeting was by Lincoln Fields, and Lord Hammond, being cooler now and his good-temper returning, sent word to Cherwell, where he stood, begging to know in what relation he was to the lady; "For," says his second, "my lord Hammond would do no wrong to no man, and if my lord Cherwell should by chance have the right, my lord will put up his sword."

"I have no right," says Cherwell, glittering with anger; "my will is my right, as my lord shall know, and every huff in town."

This insolence sent the embassy away in a fury, and the duel began. My lord pressed his antagonist hotly, but he, using some foreign trick, pierced him through the shoulder, and himself fell immediately on that, stricken through the belly by a furious assault. Cherwell threw down his rapier and went over to his enemy, his face being now quite cold.

"You're not dead, Jack," says he, anxiously, and thereupon my lord Hammond opened his eyes, and feebly winked up at my lord.

"I have thrust you abominably cruel," says my lord. "But by God, Jack, I have taught you a lesson not to wag your dirty tongue."

"I would some one would learn you not to wag yours,"

says Hammond with a comical grin. "Look to your wound," and groaned a little.

"Wound!" says Cherwell in a surprise, and burst out laughing, and flinging himself down upon the ground, seized Hammond's hand and shook it.

"You're right, Jack," he cried, "I am no ranter," and stood up again quickly. "I have done one thing that is right, and now I will do another," he said, and began to walk weakly away. But he had not gone very far ere he reeled and came staggering backwards to the earth, where he fell with a sound, calling upon his second, for his wound was draining him sorely.

"Is that Tony come down?" asked Hammond of the surgeon, his eyes being closed. "I could ha' sworn I got him. Damn him for a swaggering cheat!" And that is the true account of the duel between these two noblemen, as I had it from the surgeon himself many years afterwards.

But my lord Cherwell was not disposed to lie abed in this juncture, and, his wound proving less than was expected, he dragged himself against his orders to the house of Lady Ellicott. Here he encountered the lady herself, who treated him in a very amiable fashion, as though she owed him no grudge. Whereupon he taxed her bluntly with dissimulation, and urged her to be honest. She laughed, and demanded of him, why any man should put such a foolish request to her, for she says: "If 'twas any but you, my lord, I would put him with his face to the glass to stare at his own image."

"You think me honest, then?" says he, smiling.

"I think you innocent," she said. "You have no right in this town. Get you back to Dulsiebridge, if it be called so."

"Very well," said he, growing quiet, "I will, and I may take what I wish with me."

"What is that?" she asked.

"Look you, madam," said he, paying no heed. "Why will ye not give up this persecution?"

"I have the girl's interest at heart, as you should know," says Lady Ellicott, smiling on him from her painted eyes.

"Be damned to that," said he; "you expose her to scandal."

"There is no success," says she, "without a scandal. Lard, my fine Tony, you should remember that."

"I recall," said he sharply, "what befell a lady in the year of our Lord 1677."

"Faith, you need not have the memory of an historian," says she, ogling him. "But what you can recall placed a lady very high."

"It was very scandalous," he said. "But come, I will not have you do what you have set before yourself, and he who says that is he who was there in that year you would forget."

"There is no other would dare," she said, and smiled. "But what right have you to contravene me, my lord?"

He was silent a minute. "I will make my right," he said. "It is for that I am come. None shall ask me so again," and he pushed through to where he guessed that the girl might be. She rose on his entrance, and set aside her embroidery, starting forth to meet him very gladly—a slender body of due proportions, flushed to her eyes; and for a while she stood silent before him, in nothing like to that pitiful woman that had entreated him a little time before.

“Mistress,” said my lord, bowing, but speaking very quick, “I am come to put a question before you for your answer.”

“You shall have what answer I may make out of all friendliness, my lord,” quoth she, her breath flowing faster.

“I would have you to marry me,” says he plainly, and he looked over his shoulder to where her step-mother stood by the doorway.

Mistress Alethea also followed his gaze, and the two of them stared quietly on the woman. But she made no movement at all, and returned their glances with equal austerity. The girl came back now to his face, and she gazed on him with a serious stillness.

“Why is it that you offer me this honour, my lord?” she said presently, speaking in her clear voice. “I am but a child, of no account, and you are a great figure before the world.”

“Whatever figure I show before my fellows,” says he, with a bow, “that would you engross and magnify.”

She was silent a moment. “I should do you a disservice to be united to you,” she said.

“You would make me the envy of all eyes,” he returned.

“I should draw upon you an evil fortune,” she cried.

He tapped on his sword. “’Tis with this that I should stand between my wife and ill.”

She averted her face from him. “I come of a name that they would taint with dishonour,” she said.

“’Tis I that should protect you from that shame,” he said quickly, “as by God’s grace I will,” and once more

he looked upon the face of Lady Ellicott ; but she was smiling.

“ My lord,” cried the girl of a sudden, and losing all her calm, she showed the signals of embarrassment, “ you press me for what I may not.”

“ I press no lady,” cried Cherwell. “ But yet it is my belief——”

“ Pray, my lord,” she broke in with agitation, “ give me the liberty to hold my own belief. . . . Nay, you would not compel me to this match ? ”

She trembled a little, and my lord fell back crestfallen.

“ Madam, you shall do what you will,” he said.

“ That is,” said she quickly, “ that I shall esteem you all my life.”

“ Esteem is a wife’s word,” he said stubbornly.

“ Wife’s ? ” she cried sharply. “ Nay, it is but a poor parson’s phrase, my lord. ’Tis one of reverence and authority. It is so I am situate towards you. Yet why do you delay, my lord ? Ye have your answer.”

She turned away, and then, swiftly turning again, and as though the words overflowed upon her lips in a tide of feeling :

“ You plead in the name of love,” she cried, “ when it is but your pity pricks you. I have asked once of your pity, and may God befriend you for what you gave in your compassion. Yet will I not again, nay, not even so much, not even the much that is so greatly less than this. It shames me.”

My lord was silent for a time before this unexpected passion ; and then :

“ If I offer you what you wish not,” he said, in a lower voice, “ at least, it is not my pity. See, press your



hand here," and he touched his shoulder; "'tis an open wound your fingers touch."

She cried out sharply.

"Ah, madam," said he, "perchance it is I that ask your pity."

"You shall have all that I may give you," she said, keeping a hold upon herself. "Yet, my lord, I will not have you so abused for one who is no kin. 'Tis those wounds that shame me. They are not for me; I admit them not."

But here Lady Ellicott intervened, coming forward to them.

"She says well, my lord," said she. "You are fetching the girl's name into some scandal, and to be the talk of the town about your quarrels; and what right have you?"

My lord drew away and bowed, and from where she stood, with her own face lowered, Mistress Alethea could see his violet eyes shining and glittering like steel daggers pointed upwards.

"I am doubly rebuked," said he, speaking slowly, through his fury, "and I would ask your pardon. But you should fear not, for I vow to Heaven that when next I fight or act, 'twill be with a coloured pretext. Ye shall be no more alarmed."

The manner of his speech affected Lady Ellicott strangely.

"What, you will still continue after this rebuff?" she cried. "Have you not taken your discharge?"

"Yea," he said abruptly, "I take it now," and with a bow towards them both, he stalked from the room, leaving Lady Ellicott staring after him in amazement and alarm.

Indeed to them that knew him most deeply, it could not appear possible that Cherwell would resign from the struggle. He cared not one jot that the girl bade him give up. Her refusal aggravated him rather, and he swore that she should be rescued despite herself; while the opposition of Lady Ellicott threw him into a cold and great resentment. My lord was like a dog that will hang upon its quarry and worry at it; he had struck his fangs in this quarrel, and he was of a black and bitter obstinacy. The very slowness with which this tardy conflict grew and opened, and the tedium with which it was spread over so long, animated him with stubborn resolutions. It was of a piece with his unusual character and the reckless hazards of his life. And the time was soon come when he was plunged into the thick of action, and when he was the less like to pause and consider and turn from what he had laid before him; for there was none of that blood that ever lived to whom the prudence of a retreat was possible.

It happened that not long afterwards there was a merry party upon the water, dropping down from Whitehall. The King was better of health, and he was fond of these entertainments, so that he was accustomed to use his barges once or twice in the summer. There was a great assemblage present upon the river (so it is said), and among others the Lady Castlemaine, who was the Duchess of Cleveland, drifted down in a boat, very melancholy and proud to see. It was a night of stark moonlight, and the airs were blowing soft from the Pool, so that with the lights and the lanthorns and the outcry of voices it was a very joyous scene, such as those that have witnessed the like have declared beyond rival. My lord

Cherwell, too, formed one of this gay company, and with Sir Philip Beavis, went aground by the marshes of Lambeth, the two being taken up with great merriment. But a little way below Westminster Hall the boat, travelling very briskly in the tide, struck another upon the counter, the which impact sent Sir Philip into the bottom with his legs sprawling.

“Get ye up!” cried Cherwell, laughing to see this fat fellow; but with that, and in the act to play some foolish trick, he stayed, and gazed upon the boat that was now sheering off.

“By God!” says he, “but there is something in that appearance that I know,” and, leaping into the prow, he stared earnestly through the moonlight.

’Twas true enough; for what he determined in the distance was the form of Lady Ellicott, and he that seemed to speak with her bore the air of the man Grimshaw.

But he had no time to consider them, for Sir Philip, rising with difficulty, fell back against the rowlocks of that slender craft, which, being heavy on the top with a raised poop and a company of people, rolled about and discharged its burden into the water. Upon that there was a great ado, and many voices cried out, until one by one they were all fetched into safety; but Lord Cherwell, being pitched further into the river, came up to the surface and struck forth for the lights. He had not gone twenty paces when he was carried alongside a great barge, burning with many lights; and, clambering over the side, he stepped aboard, all dripping. The first that his eyes lighted upon was his Highness, who was talking with a lady. She called out, laughing at this apparition;

but the Duke said nothing, and then (for he had the manners of his family):

“I bid you welcome, my lord,” said he. “I see you have been very merry.”

My lord bowed. “I am no figure for your Highness’s company,” he said, “and, if I have your Highness’s leave, I will step overboard once more.”

“Nay,” said James, “I will fetch you to shore.”

My lord bit his lip, for he was angered to have blundered upon such hospitality.

“If your Highness will bethink,” he said quickly, “there is that between us which should make this meeting difficult.”

“I know of nothing between us, my lord,” said the Duke with something of his brother’s irony, “save a few feet of distance which will preserve me from catching cold.”

My lord leaned against the verge. “As you will,” said he; “your Highness is very generous. But indeed it were better for you that I should drown.”

“I pray you, my lord, to believe me more merciful,” said the Duke suavely; and there was no other word said until they came to the shore.

Here my lord offered his bow, and stepped forth, and the barge put off down the river. My lord stood watching, and as he has told me, he marked the great blue over-arching heaven, that was bright and clear, stealing down beyond the back of the river; and in the front the lighted barge walk slowly into that empty vault. But then his gaze turned upon James, and he watched him until the boat became a twinkling of eyes upon the water. Then, remembering his wet clothes, he went back to the hostel.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AN ACCOUNT OF THE ADVENTURE IN THE HOUSE ON THE RIVER

MY lord Cherwell was called forth in the middle of play the next evening by his man, Ravel, that had been appointed to keep watch upon Lady Ellicott's house. He was gaming with the Marquess of Hammond, who was now quite well of his wound, but threw down the dice upon the alarm, his brows bent and his vision shifting at the tale ; for Ravel had brought news from Westminster that the girl was gone. This he had learned from the wench who was used to attend upon Mistress Alethea, and who was wringing of her hands (he said), and crying she would never see her mistress again.

“Whither went Lady Ellicott to-day?” asked Cherwell.

“Her ladyship is gone nowhither,” answered Ravel. “She sits at home, my lord, and vows her step-daughter has gone upon a visit.”

“What was there drove from the doors?” demanded my lord.

“There was nothing stayed before the house all day,” said Ravel. “That does the wench assure me.”

“By which way then is she gone?” he cried impatiently. “You had my orders to watch.”

“My lord,” says Ravel humbly, “between three and the dawn there was a boat put up the river, as I have discovered, swinging out into the stream; but who was there I know not.”

My lord rose, and uttered an oath.

“You must give me leave, Jack,” said he, turning to Hammond.

“Nay, by Heaven, but I will go with you,” said the Irishman, jumping to his feet; and the two went out together, followed by the man.

“Belike she is gone of her own will, Tony,” said Hammond.

“She shall go neither of her own will nor against it,” cried Cherwell sharply. “I have what I have at stake, and, by God, I will hold to my word.”

“Zounds, man,” says the Marquess, “I’m with you, for whatever it may be, and whatever the little wanton desires.”

But my lord heard nothing, only Ravel; for he was pushing fast for the river by Westminster. Below Whitehall he came to a pause, and the clocks were then striking eleven in a dark night, though the moon was forecast on the golden margins of the city.

I was never able to hear by what means this small company tracked a path upon the river. At Westminster Ravel brought up the man that had seen the boat leave the steps, and, learning its direction, Cherwell took another and set off up the stream. They passed by the village of Chelsea, and the marshes opposite, and by various directions were fetched up at last in Putney. Here at a little

villainous tavern my lord chanced upon a waterman, who swore abominably and was very drunken, but recalled a boat that fouled him in the early morning. This had her nose laid up stream, and was making (so he declared) for the bank above Fulham; at which news Cherwell shoved off without a word, himself and Ravel pulling at the oars. He ran the boat ashore and crept along the edges of the land, examining every stage under the light of the moon that was now rising. But presently Hammond shivered, and, says he—

“’Tis cold work, Tony, and I could welcome a bottle in my belly,” with which, as Cherwell paid him no heed, he rolled over, and cried he with his eyes set forward, “Maybe the King will comfort us in our stomachs, an we ask him.”

“What say you?” asked Cherwell, who had not heeded him, but supposing he offered some guidance.

“Why, there,” says he, pointing, “’tis where they say that Nell lay hid,” and he gave her a merry ugly name, laughing.

My lord stared across the rising bank where the lights of the night were shining on a house among trees.

“What place is that?” he asked sharply.

“’Tis the palace of the king’s doxy,”<sup>1</sup> laughed Hammond.

My lord said nothing, but thrust the nose of the boat into the bank, and leaped out, climbing upon the muddy ground. When he had reached the level of the em-

<sup>1</sup> It is probable that this house was that called “Craven Cottage,” by Fulham Palace, which was destroyed by fire several years ago.—EDITOR.

bankment he stood still and again stared towards the house. It was of no great size, but builded very flat and rambling, and with a number of broken angles ; so that you could not determine at a glance what was the shape of the architecture. The moon shone on the windows that fronted the river, but it seemed to Cherwell that he could see a light also glinting from the panes. About him the embankment was very rudely made, and at high tides the water was used to come breaking through the gaps, and flooding the lower parts of the garden.

My lord was now satisfied that he had come to his destination, and he was for examining the house to see what advantages it should offer. For if the girl were fetched anywhither, she was surely hurried to this place that had been the King's own privy refuge. Moreover, it lay most convenient to the Duke's hand, being so nigh town, and yet amazingly secluded. So, bidding Hammond to wait, he stepped down into the garden and picked his way towards the cottage.

There were several doors into the house, which, save for the one side towards the river, was dark and silent. But from above, behind those brightened windows, flowed a gentle humming noise, as it were of some one singing softly or of a child crooning for itself. For the first time now was Cherwell staggered, not knowing whence this sound could come, and thinking it to be incongruous with what he expected from that secret house. He went carefully about, therefore, scrutinizing all things lest he should be trespassing upon some innocent person. Yet finding nothing to direct him one way or another he was at a loss, and in some hopelessness he began to conceive a new plan, and climbing upon the eaves by one low angle of the



cottage he got into a sheltered corner, between two walls, where the darkness clung. Then he lay still for a space of time, until hearing the noise of music once more, and now breaking clearer, he felt about him through the blackness, and discovered a barred window. The iron of which this was wrought he managed to so dispose that he crept through; for he was resolved to put it to the test if this was really some private dwelling-house. But no sooner was he entered by the window than in getting to the floor beyond he stumbled, and endeavouring to recall his weight, pitched headlong through a black arras and into the open light of a chamber.

There was a cry greeted him in this fall, and when he had struggled upon his legs, he saw before him in the corner of the room a woman of a young and vivid face, and mighty handsome to the eyes, staring at him in affright. She was concealed in a great and delicate robe, such as women wear in their private closets, but she had the full figure of a high dame, and a sparkling look beneath her terror; and she sat, bent forward easily in her round chair, the strings of a lute silent under her fingers. But presently, as they two exchanged glances, she started, and drew up her body, her lute falling to the floor.

“Pray what do you here?” she asked in a high voice.

But Cherwell being set aback by this discovery, was for a moment speechless, and then said he with a bow—

“Indeed, madam, but I should have wondered myself until this instant, when I cannot doubt.”

“What mean you, sir?” she demanded with asperity, but no longer with fear in her appearance.

“Why,” he said, “I who am a blunderer have now

come by a mission ;” for in a flash he had considered that he was mistaken after all ; and he threw aside his errand promptly and was falling into a new pose.

The lady smiled. “But that tells me not what you do in my chamber,” she said, speaking with a little lisp.

“Why,” said my lord impudently, “that you should know even better than I, madam.”

This time she laughed aloud, and strummed upon her lute, making a little pleasing melody. She had a languorous air, and her face looked mischief at him.

“You come for audience to my silly strains ?” she said. “You do me honour. Heard you me from the river ?”

“Nay, from the woods in which the nightingales are singing, yet none so sweetly as this, I vow,” said Cherwell lightly.

“You pay me court like a devout lover,” says the lady, nodding at him, “but I beg you to press me not. It is Sappho and not some easy goddess that you encounter.”

“Indeed,” said Cherwell in the same gay tone, “I should be content with Sappho, who is of a sufficient laxness.”

The lady laughed outright, and stood up tall and straight before him, showing more clearly of what an agreeable figure she was and how her face was handsome.

“You do very well for a stray thief wandering out of the night,” she said.

“I would be a thief, an I dared,” he answered.

For an instant she gazed on him out of her voluptuous and slow-moving eyes, and then she said quickly—

“’Tis not the first time, my lord.”

“What,” he cried, leaping forward a little, “you know me?” and examined her keenly.

She turned of a pink colour. “Have I shot well?” she asked.

“Ah,” says my lord, letting fall his glance, “I know you now, fair lady. Pray pardon me that I was so blind, and remember only that I was so disordered by you. You are Lady Katharine Roodhouse, that was lady to her Highness.”

“I am glad to have pricked your memory, my lord,” she cried pleasantly, and not at all embarrassed now.

“Yea, I have read those pretty verses of Carinthia,” he said; “I vow ye’re our English Sappho truly. There is none plucks such honeyed notes upon the instruments. But I have trespassed upon your austere solitude, and I will withdraw by your leave. ’Tis a proper bower for a muse to lie alone.”

She gazed at him curiously, with her teeth resting lightly on her full underlip, and of a sudden there rose voices from the room beyond. My lord moved to this door.

“Nay, I have held you too long, madam,” he said, but she moved to him in her stately manner.

“You may not pass that way,” she cried, displaying some agitation.

Cherwell smiled, as a mask smiles. “’Tis not your privy room?” he asked. “Nay, for ’tis a man’s voice I hear, madam, which would make the thought impossible. But sure, if ’tis your closet I will break in and thrust the wretch forth.”

At this she was silent a moment, and then she made a gesture with her hands, and, as if dismissing him to what he would, returned to her chair, and took up her lute.

“I cannot bar your way, my lord,” she said calmly, “and I swear that I have no desire to. Get you on to what you will.”

Cherwell bowed, and opening the door without a word stepped forth. Thus was he come into a narrow passage that was quite dark, but led him on before a door whence a shaft of light issued. And here he stopped. There was still a mingling of voices, and he seemed now to catch one that was a woman’s, but the thrumming of the Lady Katharine’s lute confused his ears. So presently he rapped boldly, and upon that the voices ceased; and at once he pushed open the door and entered.

Though the chamber into which he had trespassed was ill-lighted he could see very plainly all that he desired, and it was upon James, Duke of York, that his gaze fell. He had expected this, and showed no surprise in the survey. Not so his Highness, who stared in anger and dismay upon him, and put out a hand to pull the bell-rope by him, but suddenly refrained.

“What means this unexpected irruption, my lord?” he asked haughtily. “What errand brings you to disturb me without orders?”

“You will pardon me,” said Cherwell very coolly and very civilly, “but I was unaware of your Highness’s presence here. Else, surely I had not so blundered.”

The Duke looked at him in some perplexity, for no doubt he had expected another tone.

“’Tis well, my lord,” he said presently, “and having discovered my presence, you will, no doubt, withdraw.”

“Your Highness,” said Cherwell with his very grand bow, and appearing most humble, “I have indeed to crave

your forgiveness for a great liberty, but I deemed you lay in the Town. And I was led hither tracking of a girl that——”

“My lord——” broke in the Duke, turning colour.

“Nay, nay, your Highness, hear me,” said my lord quickly ; “’tis ill in me to trouble you with these trivial matters of my person, and you so late and tired as I make no doubt. Yet if your Highness will but hear me, it may be you would set in excuse of my gross trespass, a passion such as I can plead.”

“What is it you would say, my lord ?” said the Duke, showing his wonder on his face.

“Why, your Highness, there is an uncommon little madam that I have cherished. ’Tis a deep affair, your Highness, and the witch has fled me, and I pursued, till she vanished into this refuge, presto, like a flame.”

“What jest is this ?” cried the Duke, furious.

My lord bowed.

“’Tis no jest to me,” he said ; “the wench has sought shelter doubtless in your Highness’s kitchen.”

He met the Duke’s gaze, and his own was cool, yet glancing ; but his Highness’s was disturbed and doubtful. Then the Duke spoke.

“You must be aware, my lord, that a refuge is sacred,” he said sardonically.

“I do not ask your Highness to give her up, but only that I may speak with her. Perchance,” he added, “I may persuade her yet.”

There was a stillness fell between them, while the Duke examined my lord from under his lowered brows. They had spoken under a disguise, and each knew well what the other intended. Then said his Highness—

“You are at liberty to search my kitchens for this light-o’-love, my lord.”

“Ah,” says Cherwell softly, “I have put you about too gravely, and I will not longer. But your Highness shall give me your word that there is none such harbouring in this house.”

“I know nought of what kitchen-maids may do,” says the Duke with an ironic smile.

“Then with your Highness’s permission I will begin here,” says Cherwell quickly, and, whipping out his sword, goes tapping of the oaken panels round the room.

This sudden act fell as a surprise to the Duke, for he frowned and appeared to be discomposed. Yet the play had been so conducted between them that he dared not interpose with any grace; and for a time he stood watching my lord’s movements without any sign other than his unpleasant emotions upon his face. Then with a satanic smile he stepped to the door.

“I will leave you to your task of love, my lord,” he said, and closed the door behind him.

Cherwell came to a stop on the instant, and would have run abruptly from the room, for it was no part of his design to lose sight of the Prince. But as his hands touched the knob, the door opened of itself and there stood before him the lady Katharine Roodhouse.

“I have heard that you were a bold man, my lord,” she said, “but I knew not how bold.”

“I am bold enough even to brave your anger, madam,” he said, and would have thrust her aside impatiently. But she laughed.

“Tell me,” she said, “is it such an ardent passion burns you to set you on?”

“Madam,” said Cherwell, examining her with curiosity, “it is an affair of politics which even the dalliance of a fine lady may not postpone.”

“Oh lord,” she cried elegantly, “you point at me, but I am sunk in my verses. There is my only devotion.”

“There are many that lament that,” returned Cherwell, “for what is a gain to Art is also a loss to Love.”

“Fie!” she cried. “Your lordship is a bad man, to jest upon such holy matters. For what is love? ’Tis Art that is eternal, and he that wins her must be circumscribed by a thousand laws of allegiance.”

“Alas!” said Cherwell, “I have no chance then save to win a mortal love.”

She laughed softly, and turned towards the door.

“’Tis high policy that brings you here, my lord?” she said; “I am not one (a poor woman of some taste) to oppose high policies. Indeed, if my little skill might aid it should be given.” And as she opened the door she said in a lower voice—“You may solve your policy in the tenth panel from this door,” and laughing low she vanished.

But my lord sprang forward, and eagerly set forth to count upon the oak, until reaching the place he pressed and pulled, so that two lengths of panel at last gave way and disclosed a tall slim passage, the width and the height of a man. Into this hole he leapt, and pulling back the panels stepped into the blackness of a descending stairway.

The staircase took him downwards between two wooden walls, and presently a turn brought him with a blow against an obstacle. This, by groping with his fingers, he made out to be a door, and discovering a handle, he turned it, and so came forth into the moonlight. He now perceived that he was without the house,

and that the garden was before him. He ran again up the stairway, stumbling in the darkness, but the panels would not yield from that side, lacking the proper spring ; so that he was driven back into the garden and knew that he was tricked, cursing the woman for her double words.

“By God,” said my lord, “but I will have ’em yet, if I burn these rats out,” and he set off down the garden towards the river.

As he sped he caught the glimpse of a figure among the trees and called to it in a sharp voice : “Jack, Jack,” and “Ravel, Ravel” ; but the shadow was gone, and he ran forward. As he passed under a heavy clump of lilac bushes he thought he heard some one coming upon him, and, supposing this might be one of those that were in the boat, he stopped and turned quickly. In that instant he was aware of a tall figure that stood over him, and a hand that reached for his heart. My lord fell at the stroke, and recognized the man in the moonlight. It was Fergus the assassin.

A little after Lord Hammond with Ravel, having heard the calling of their names, came upon my lord where he lay in the bushes, and plucked him out. The movement brought him to his wits again, and he looked at them both.

“What is it ?” cried the Marquess, “are ye hurt ?” But Ravel shed tears.

“’Tis the second time,” said Cherwell, not heeding them at all. “The second time, by Heaven.”

“You are struck,” said Hammond, examining him. “Whom met you at the house ?”

“I have been in the gracious company of his Highness the Duke,” said Cherwell grimly.



Hammond stood up.

“By God!” he cried, “this is a dirty piece of work for a Prince, by God it is.”

“Ah, you know not the Stewarts,” says Cherwell with a little laugh.

Hammond said nothing in answer, but picking him up (for he was the bigger man) walked to the river, and dropped him in the boat. This done he and Ravel set to the oars. My lord lay in the bottom of the boat, and it is likely that he went off insensible; but presently he awoke, and drew himself up into a posture of sitting.

“Tony, what do you?” asked Hammond in a warning voice. “You have two wounds, you fool.”

“Nay,” says Cherwell, “I am most fortunate. There is now but one. The rogue has struck but upon your track, Hammond.”

Hammond was silent for a while, being somewhat sobered; then he spoke.

“He hath set his mind to this, Tony,” said he. “Let him have his fling. It is ill to cross the heir presumptive. I am no friend to his Highness, though he be of my own way of religion. Yet he will be King. I care for little, as none knows better than yourself, but I see no advantage to be taken in such a game. You have not even the lady at stake.”

Cherwell said nothing immediately, but he addressed Ravel soon.

“Bind up this scratch, Ravel rogue,” said he, “it bleeds. Jack, ye may go to the Devil!” And he said no more, but, his wound being cared for rudely, so they dropped down the river to Charing Cross.

## CHAPTER IX

### HOW MY LORD RODE TO DURCOMBE, AND OF THE COMPANY THERE

THIS affair by the river, though my lord spoke not of it, leaked out through Lord Hammond, who plied a free and violent tongue. So much so that it soon became as familiar in the Town as that other story of the stopping of the coach, and with the same result. The Duke, who had not realized the man, it is certain, was alarmed by my lord's insistence, and the news of the attempt upon him caused him to grow more uneasy. It may be that he was not connected with the assault, for Fergus was bold villain enough of himself, and indeed it is thought he knew nothing of it, but that the matter was quite of an accident. Yet the increasing reports of his conduct made him more prudent, and the next day he was back at the Court, where he stayed for some weeks apparently undisturbed, and without any design.

My lord Cherwell, meanwhile, lay abed with his wound, saying nothing on the subject, but talking and jesting with his friends. He inquired of them the news of the Town, and was cheered by their tales of some new scandal or another. But there was not one dared touch

upon the business that my lord had in hand, for his look was a menace when any approached that mark. So he lay and talked and grew well. But upon the morning of the day he was suffered to get about he bade Ravel prepare him horses.

The man was in an alarm, fearing what he intended, and being anxious for the wound. But Cherwell put him aside curtly, and the horses were fetched, with a coach. Ravel had not held his tongue, and it was noised abroad that Cherwell was departing upon a journey, which brought several, and amongst them his physician, to his doors. The physician remonstrated with him on his folly, saying that he had only suffered him to stir about, and no more.

"You may not take so much strain upon you, my lord," he pleaded. "You must not think of a journey to Dulsiebridge."

"I am thinking of no such journey," said Cherwell briefly.

"Whither go you then, Tony?" asked Lord Hammond, who was there.

"I have a little business in Somersetshire," says my lord slowly, "and it will not wait."

Upon that Hammond made a wry face and lifted his brows, but the physician still urged him not to budge.

"It would be your death," he said.

"My death it shall not be, though I will not promise that some other shall not die of it," says Cherwell grinning. He would listen to no argument, and set off the same afternoon, meaning to lie some distance upon the Bath road. They were scarce on their way when Ravel, who was riding with the postilion, was astonished

by a command to halt, and getting down came to his master.

“Whose house is that?” asked Cherwell, looking at a great place before which they were pausing. Ravel shook his head and called on the postilion, and presently some one cried out that it was Sir William Roodhouse’s.

“I thought so,” said Cherwell. “Give me an arm,” and he alighted from the coach, and went into the house.

He was in a great fury, but seeming calm, as he was used to seem, and he demanded to see the Lady Katharine Roodhouse. It appears that there was no difficulty set in his way, and, on the contrary, the lady gladly received him.

“I have come to you, yet again uninvited, madam,” he said, “and on the eve of a departure.”

“You go to the country?” she asked, looking out on the coach. “But what of your wound, my lord?”

“Wound!” he said; “I have no wound, your ladyship, save what I take at your eyes.”

“Oh indeed,” she said, smiling on him. “And yet you would run away.”

“I am not of a sufficient hardihood,” he answered. “I lay claim to some resolution and a right good courage, like any man of honour. But I cannot stand before secret enemies. Madam, your eyes assassinate; they burn me like twin daggers in my back. I confront them so, and they will do me no harm, being meek and shining and brimming with fine feeling. No sooner am I turned than they leap forth upon me, and stab and strike. ’Tis a clandestine warfare I dare not meet. I am not ashamed to run from those traitor eyes.”

Lady Katharine showed a little colour, and she answered nothing for a moment. She saw at once to what he was pointing, and when she spoke it was with greater seriousness and some impatience.

“You would seek to charge me with that act, my lord,” she said. “You wrong me. I am not guilty of anything save of a desire to save you from a folly. You would pursue what you had best give up. It is a course that brings no profit, but only danger ; and I would have sent you out into the free and open night rather than have you linger within peril.”

He bowed. “Your consideration touches me nearly,” he said. “’Tis a pity I took nothing but a wound from it.”

The lady frowned angrily, and then, her expression changing, laughed lightly over her whole handsome face.

“Wound !” she cried. “What wound have you ?” echoing his own words.

Cherwell bowed gravely. “Why, that from your eyes, as I have said,” he said very swiftly.

She regarded him with admiring eyes, as though she would espy what he was contemplating, but he went on.

“I am come to bid you good-bye, fleeing from those eyes,” he said in a voice that was something mocking.

“Whither go you ?” she asked in another tone.

“My health is none so sound ; I must be for airing it,” he returned.

“Lard !” she said, seating herself with a graceful motion. “’Tis ill to live so gaily. ’Tis a hard subsistence, this fighting and this roystering.”

She put out a hand and drew to her a most elegant silver-piece, toying with it. But my lord bowed only,

and limped to the door. There her glance challenged him, yet he made no sign.

“Yea, madam,” he said, smiling, “your eyes are Italianate bravos, as I swear.”

“You will find they know their purpose, my lord,” she cried after him merrily, as he went forth.

Yet what design he had in thus visiting so dangerous a woman was only in my lord’s intelligence. He was aware of her repute, that it was most hazardous, she being a handsome tall woman of a most lively manner, and wedded to an honest dull fellow. There were tales of her when she was in her Highness’s service, but owing to his absence abroad Cherwell had seen her but once or so. She was considered a clever creature, but had the smallest ambition, and the easiest good-nature. By which reason she took more thought to her pleasure than to her advancement, and was content to be what men believed her. Yet with all this she had the greatest delicacy of taste, and would shrink from the vulgar, delighting in beautiful and rare things, such as abounded in her house. She came of a wealthy family, moreover, and her husband had been some two years in France upon the King’s business, though it was whispered that he went also in the Duke’s interest, his Highness being desirous of cultivating her attentions.

Cherwell got forth into his coach again, and it is odds but he was enlivened by this encounter, for he had a gay temper at the bottom. He lay that night near Windsor, and pushed on the next day towards the west. The third day after he left London he passed through Dulsie-bridge, being sighted first by one of his men who was harrowing in the Great Acre. This fellow ran back to

the house, giving tongue to his news, and since the road curved a great deal in its passage to the Park, the information reached me, who was then at Heriot Deane, or ever my lord came up before the doors. But he made no pause nor any sign of staying, though it was some four years since he had been there. Instead he bade me come with him in the sharpest voice, and almost without a greeting.

“Is that you, Hilary?” he says, seeing me in the twilight of the hall. “There is a seat in my coach there, which you would very well fill. Come; I can tarry ten minutes.”

But when I protested, being more amazed than vexed at him, he laughed.

“I’m on a journey to gather what is owed me,” he said. “Damn me, Hilary, but that should please your stingy soul.”

The jest was rude enough, but it was by these signs I saw that some serious matter was afoot, and presently consented without more pleas. So that within half-an-hour the coach was galloping for the west again, with a new passenger.

It was during that journey I got such information, scattered in pieces and given in fits of talking, as enabled me first to get some inkling of the business on which my lord rode. To me it seemed a mad design, and what I could that I did, if by any chance I might avert him. Yet, knowing the man, I had little hope, and I accompanied him with some fears and not a little curiosity as to what would issue. As it happened there was little of interest that befel for some time, and I shall pass over the events of the next few weeks as lightly as is neces-

sary. My lord reached the village of Durcombe in the Quantocks on a Sunday night, and put up in the inn, having left his coach at Bath, and gone forward in the saddle. The house of the Ellicotts stood a mile or more from here, and was named after the village. It was a great wandering pack of buildings which Sir Ralph Ellicott, Knight Banneret, had reared in the reign of King Henry. By the side of this, and within striking distance, so to say, my lord sate him down, for all the world like a hound with his head on his paws, to watch. He made no movement, and never once visited the House, though it was spread abroad at once that he was near. He behaved very delicately, giving not a hint of his intentions, but rising early, and supping and talking and drinking with such company as offered. The temper of that countrysidē was strained and near to cracking. The King himself was unpopular, and his brother more so, and they that frequented the inn spoke much of the succession. This was the district that afterwards came to be such a mark for Lord Jefferies, when the rising under Monmouth had been put down; and the gentry hereabouts were even now disaffected, and anxious. They feared the King's death, lest a worse evil should visit them, and they held their narrow notions strenuously, debating of the matter together. Cherwell was most a listener, for he loved not to talk except in fits; but they were eager to gather knowledge from him and what he thought of the Duke.

“’Tis a curse,” said he loudly, “that we must have such a one on the top of the King, to rule us,” and when he was more than commonly excited, he cried, “There is the devil in these Stewarts,”—which cry,



though it startled those that heard it, drew him into popular favour. In truth my lord had the trick of winning friends wherever he went, and he was a favourite in those country parts; so that he found his time pleasantly engaged. But all the while he withheld himself from Durcombe Manor, where a party was now gathered, very merry, as we heard.

Lady Ellicott had taken alarm, like the Duke himself, at that affair in the riverside cottage, and I suppose to both it had seemed wiser to desist yet a little longer. At any rate while James went into the Town, it was stated that she had set forth with her step-daughter for Durcombe, where she would remain for some time in retirement. This news it was that had brought my lord down to the Quantocks, who suspected more than he heard, and knew that what might happen would be worse even than his suspicions. Lady Ellicott and her step-daughter were at Durcombe Manor, and the former had gotten some of her lively friends about her, to cheer her in the seclusion she detested. But it was not till after a week that Cherwell met her, and then it was of an accident. He made her a grave salute, and would have passed on, but she stayed him.

“What do you here, my lord?” she called with a sneer. “’Tis a fine act, sure, to prejudice so the fair name of a poor girl.”

“Madam,” says he politely, “I am here upon my health. I had the mischance to be cut about in a disreputable brawl of which you will not have heard. And this air incites me. I have my hopes that it shall bring such warmth and colour to my face as it has already done upon your ladyship’s.”

Lady Ellicott flushed even through her paint a deeper red.

“Sir, if there was any one by he would learn you——,” she began ; but he, as if he heard nothing of this, looked at the girl, Alethea, who was with her.

“Is this your daughter, madam ?” said he. “Faith, I knew not you had one of such a length. Her legs belie her age, I’ll swear.”

At that the girl’s cheeks also were stained with her agitation, but Lady Ellicott broke out furiously—

“My lord rogue,” she cried, “you think you have a pretty wit, you ; but, Gads my life, you ——, you shall suffer for this. You foul toad, to empty your insolence upon honourable blood ! Get you gone, or I will have you beaten from the valley. What are you but spy and sneaking turncoat ?”

My lord bowed and left her, smiling to himself, to have provoked her so ; but of the offence unto Mistress Alethea, or if there were any offence, he thought not at all.

Yet Lady Ellicott was too cunning a woman for all her shrewish violence not to perceive that she had made a mistake. And the next time they encountered she wore quite another habit. Indeed, I think that she had thrown herself out of the way to meet him again. For she was all smiles, and invited him warmly to the house, declaring he should find good company, such as he was used to love.

My lord showed towards her an equal good temper, smiling and simpering and feigning that they had just met ; and vowing with all the marks of chagrin that he would have desired nothing more than to be happy in that

company, but that he had a press of business of great urgency.

"Slife, there can be nothing of such instancy to come between us," says her ladyship, after the most fashionable manner, and ogling him.

"Nay, madam," he said, for he had not forgot what promise he had made as to the pretences under which these proceedings should hereafter march, "nay, madam," he said, "but it is a most secret deadly matter, upon the which I must hold the tongue. But let me whisper that I am in a plot," says he, "and one that shall fetch down your high princes to the humbling earth. Hark ye, madam, but you shall yet watch the face of this kingdom change and falter."

She stared at him, as though in some alarm, and as if considering whether he had kept his wits or not. But seeing something in his countenance that told her, she frowned, and turned aside.

"As you will," she said; "but you shall miss good play and pretty faces, which you once admired."

"Madam, I am admiring only of your skill," he answered, "your tierce and your quarte, and your careful eyes. But if you will pardon me I am due among my conspirators, where we are to discuss a mighty problem. I will bid you now farewell."

He got himself off, leaving me there with the lady, who took her defeat very well. She laughed, and met me with good humour, whatever she felt in her heart.

"Sir," she said, "there goes a madman. But you, I vow, are no such zealot to refuse a handsome entertainment," and added thereto a gracious invitation.

What she wanted of me I could not guess, but I know

very well that she did not ply so gently for nothing. Yet out of a curiosity and a desire to see how things stood, I accepted the hospitality of Durcombe Manor, and was there to sup that very evening. The house stood upon a decline of the hills, and the pleasure gardens, of an Italian character, stretched across the valley, set in a thickly wooded park. There was a mob of guests, very noisy, and gaming lasted until late at night. I had not yet set eyes upon the girl, but I was fated, not only to do so now, but to engage in speech with her. I wearied of the tables (for I am no gamester) and went forth, driven in some part by the loose words that began to go about regarding my lord. These it had been foolish to take offence at, but they were still improper to hear and be silent. For he was called what he doubtless appeared to all men, and was riddled with sallies for a ridiculous meddler.

“’Tis no business of mine,” says one man, who was Lord Bohun, “I have no taste for such meek wenches, but his Highness is another. And if Cherwell will not bite, why, he must needs leave the way open to others,” and he concluded with a foul phrase about Lady Ellicott.

This was the temper of these fellows, nor was there one word in respect of the girl herself. It was considered, you would suppose, that the honour was a high one, or at least that no woman would be found to refuse it. It was my lord, and how he appeared, that they discussed. And this it was that sent me from the company and into the presence of the very girl that they ignored. She was walking in the formal garden under the high moon, late as it was, and seemed to show no fears for herself. I judged her at once to be she that was the cause of all this trouble, and, the light being very clear upon her, her

singular beauty stood out very bright. My lord spoke nothing of how she looked, but indeed it was easy to see whence the Duke's fascination came, and I have not seen any woman of that time of such a brilliant loveliness.

I think she must have known me as I knew her, for she came forward willingly, as if she thought I had a message, but paused and stood, embarrassed.

"I am Sir Hilary Mace," said I with a bow, "and I have ventured here to breathe an airing this hot night."

She acknowledged my salutation, and for a moment lingered, as if in indecision. Then, apparently, upon an impulse—

"If you are he," she said, "will you carry one word for me to one of whom you know?"

"I am here for no other purpose," I told her, supposing that she was to make an appeal to Cherwell.

"I have learned what has happened," she said quickly, and with signs of agitation. "He is marked out for death, if he should carry out this generosity which he plans for me. I will not that he runs that risk. He has been assailed, and yet he continues. But he will be assailed again, and then he shall not continue any longer. I know there is a deep conspiracy about me, sir, yet he can avail me nothing. I am resigned, and I trust I keep a patient heart."

"You would have him give up?" I asked in surprise.

"I would have him return to Town," she answered. "What reason is there that he should be dragged into this quarrel? It will be his death, for there are villainous men."

"Do I say to him that you yield, madam?" I asked.

She hesitated a moment; then, "I require not his aid,"

she said in a trembling voice. "Perchance the Duke may prove merciful, when he knows all. They say his heart is set. Yet this is but a poor body. They have dragged my father's name in the dust ; that shall suffice. I will not have another's blood upon my unhappy head."

I pitied her who was thus reluctant ; a mere quavering girl, to oppose the will of princes.

"Is there none to save you from this sacrifice ?" I asked. She shook her head.

"It may be that I can save myself," she said, "and that the sacrifice that is asked of me shall be less than that which is now in question. I will face what I must face alone."

I bowed ; for I had a thought what she meant, and that she signified her death. "I will deliver your message," I said. "But those who know my lord should know you ask in vain."

"What is that ?" she asked.

"Why," said I, "he has sworn that his Highness shall not have you, whether you be fain or not, and nothing shall turn him, not even your own plea. It is I, his cousin, that promise you so. Look you, madam," said I, pointing down the valley, "there lies a watch-dog whom no threats can avert, and no prayers melt. For good or ill there is he set, with his eyes upon your door. And when you are retired into your chamber upon the Tower, and are crept in terror to your bed, with but your thin white vail and fallen hair to shield this delicate body, yonder, you shall remember, rest those eyes that watch and guard you ; for there is none that may turn my lord Cherwell from the purpose he hath declared—no, not though he rose from the dead."

She stared at me as I said this, and her breath came faster, her bosom rising and her eyes glowing in the moonlight ; and when I ended she gave a little sigh, and fell back.

“Then is he allotted to Death,” she murmured, and so turned and left me.

## CHAPTER X

### OF THE ENCOUNTER UPON THE TAUNTON ROAD

IT is certain that no authority would now have availed against my lord Cherwell's determination ; nay, and no persuasion. That which I told this girl was true in each particular, and she would not have moved him with her voice, to budge one foot from his designs. Yet of these he spoke never, and had taken me into his secrets but little, conducting himself in the inn like any lazy fellow who had no business in hand. Indeed it was but my affection for him, and a fear of his rashness, that kept me in that distant place, with nothing to do save to talk and ride about the countryside. I delivered him the message, notwithstanding, and when he heard it, he smiled but made no answer. He heeded it as little as if it had been the wind biting at his face, or a puddle of water through which he stepped ; he noticed it and no more. Yet what good he was to get by this perilous affair was more than I could see, and I doubt if he himself had any clearer thought than to sit, waiting on a chance. But the chance came, though he could not have known for sure whether Lady Ellicott proposed any treachery or not.

There came to the inn at Durcombe, when we had



been there for a week or more, a fellow that called himself Westmacott, and said that he was from Exeter. He was a little dark eager man with a composed face and a quick way, and it seemed that, like us, he had nothing to do but to walk and stare in the sun. There was a great room in the inn, with a deep fire-corner, and huge black beams crossing in the ceiling. This served us at once as a dining-hall, and a place to sit and muse; and this Westmacott kept us company. The innkeeper would have separated us, being mighty respectful, but my lord would not suffer it, and beckoned the man to him.

“Let this gentleman’s supper be set where he will,” he commanded. “This is a land where as yet a man shall have what he pays for.”

Westmacott thanked him civilly, but I saw that he shot at him a sharp and curious glance, and as though he would have spoken on that opinion. Yet he did not, and, truly, for all my lord’s gracious interference, I do not recall that he paid him any further attention during the evening. He spoke very frankly and openly with me, but he ignored the man who, by his own orders, so to speak, had been set opposite to him, and who, I could perceive, was watching him very keenly out of his busy eyes. I doubt if Cherwell rightly was conscious of him, for he had a strange power of self-absorption, and he disdained to heed what did not interest him.

Westmacott, however, was not put about by this silence, and pushed himself even nearer during the next few days. My lord had this habit of indifference to the company in which he sat, but he had also periods of affability in which he condescended. And it happened that he sometimes spoke with the other, though it had

not crossed his mind to guess or speculate upon him. Westmacott had an inquisitive nose, and was very quiet, listening without any appearance of so doing. Now and then he would thrust in a word, but usually in good season, and such as drew some answer from Cherwell. For the most part he wore the look to me of one who was waiting. It was not until we had been in Durcombe for a fortnight that he broke this custom, and we learned what manner of man he was. It was Ravel brought it about, or rather the news that Ravel had fetched. For we were supping in the great room when the fellow broke in, and, addressing his master, begged to have speech. Cherwell walked aside, and what he heard sent him back to the table, whence Westmacott was eyeing him. My lord's eyes were glowing, but he helped himself to wine ere he spoke.

"Hilary," said he, not guarding his voice at all, "there is an attempt to be made. The Instrument is come."

I, having no notion of his meaning, looked at him inquiringly, but he went on.

"That damned rogue Grimshaw is here. Ravel has seen him; and he is not used to be where no carrion is."

I glanced at Westmacott, who made a feint of being occupied with something else.

"Hush," said I, "we may discuss this afterwards!"

But Cherwell paid me no heed.

"By God," he said, slamming down his glass upon the table, "it will be odd but I shall be even with this James Stuart."

At the words, which were reckless beyond his custom, the eyes of that other went up, and gazed briskly and with a certain shining eagerness upon my lord.

“You speak of the Duke of York?” he asked in a low voice. Cherwell looked at him, as though he saw him not.

“’Tis of the Duke of York you speak, my lord?” repeated Westmacott in warmer tones.

“The Duke!” says Cherwell, who was still swinging on his emotions, “aye, the Duke,” and appeared to muse, without ever heeding the interruption of this man.

But Westmacott rose quickly to his feet, and stepping to the door closed and locked it; after which he came back to where my lord sate, still wrapped in his thoughts.

“My lord,” he said in a clear voice, but speaking low, “you are the Earl of Cherwell.”

My lord looked up, and, recognizing that he was addressed, smiled and raised his glass.

“To your good health, Mr. Waistcoat,” he said, not remembering his name.

“My lord,” said Westmacott, “you are the Earl of Cherwell, I think.”

My lord, now aroused, stared on him curiously. “What of that?” said he sharply.

But Westmacott’s eyes were burning brightly. “You were of those that followed Lord Shaftesbury,” he said. Cherwell nodded. “And you had the ear of the Duke of Monmouth?” pursued the fellow.

“It seems I am reputed afar off,” said Cherwell with a grin.

“Your lordship,” said Westmacott in a tone even lower, “was in the plot of the Rye House.”

“That was I not,” said Cherwell, laughing, “though some good friends of mine have paid the penalty.”

Westmacott sat down, and rested his elbows on the

table, not noticing this rejoinder. He was another man, and I think that Cherwell took an interest in him for the first time.

“What are you?” said he bluntly.

“My lord,” said the other, speaking fast but quietly, “I am from Taunton, where I have a business, and I deal with Bristol and with Plymouth both. These concerns I have abandoned these six days to have speech with you.”

“Why, what the devil have we here?” cries Cherwell.

“I know your history, my lord,” went on Westmacott, “and what way your affections lie. You may be plain with me, who have always leaned that way. ’Tis the Succession perplexes you, is’t not? You are here of a purpose.”

“Aye,” says my lord more slowly, “I am here of a purpose, for sure. Proceed, sir.”

“And I am here to aid you,” said the man with an air of triumph. “See ye here, my lord. There was news brought of your tarrying here, and with what reason? They that knew of what you had done and wherefore you had suffered, guessed to what purpose you were here. To that cause, my lord, I have used my life and what wealth God has granted unto me; and in the name of this poor country and her trampled freedom I am come to greet you, my lord.”

He held out a hand, his eyes brighter with feeling, and Cherwell took it.

“By the Lord,” said he, “you are an honest man, sir.”

“The Duke,” says Westmacott, “is a curse upon this land.”

“I have no cause to bless him,” says Cherwell, dryly.

"'Tis in your hands, my lord, to throw him down, to detrude him," cries the little man in his excitement.

Cherwell frowned, and regarded him for a moment intently.

"I think you speak well," said he slowly, "I am no lover of James Stuart."

I plucked his arm, for, in truth, I was alarmed at the course of his talk, and I distrusted it. "Anthony," I said, "Anthony, have a care."

But he twitched me off with a gesture of impatience.

"I am in a way to strike a blow at James Stuart this very hour, sir," says he, with the glitter of his violet eyes I knew so well.

Westmacott sank back, his features composing themselves into a look of contentment. "I knew it," said he, "I divined so much. Your lordship comes in the nick of time. The hour strikes for you," and he glanced at me with interrogation.

I shrugged my shoulders. "You must not make me party to these designs," I said coldly, "and my lord does but jest——"

"Jest!" said my lord, interposing angrily, "God's body, is there one to say I jest because I have said what I would? You had better leave us, Sir Hilary. This gentleman and I have some private business together, of which you were safest to know nothing."

Westmacott beamed over his dark red face, but I, being now as angry as my lord himself, and with better reason, took him at his word and left the room. What fell between them I know not, as I was too indignant at the time to inquire, having no patience with the business; and afterwards it was too late. Yet whether this whim-

sical opposition of Cherwell's would have passed like many another fit before, and he would have ceased to talk treason, I cannot guess. His mind was on a poise, and must be directed in this flight or that by circumstances. But the events of the next week sent him bodily over the margin, and from talking rebellion he came to act it, as shall be seen hereafter. I know that if ever a man confronted the elements of high treason with a light heart, it was he ; and truly it appeared strange how he had again come into the meshes of that remarkable Plot. For Westmacott, as I learned, had been in communication with Goodenough, who had promised to raise a force out of Taunton, and that part of the country had been duly expecting the signal for a rising. Not that the truth about the Rye House affair was known to those country folks ; but they held the Duke in much detestation, and they honoured so their religion, that they would have perilled everything to be rid of that succession. And thus it was now ; for Cherwell's name had been spread about among them, for a deliverer, and one who had come to conduct a rising on behalf of the Duke of Monmouth. Westmacott himself was, doubtless, at the bottom of this ; but all credited it, and our coming by a strange piece of irony raised great hopes and enlivened the hearts of those poor people. But what really brought my lord hither—of that they knew nothing.

My lord seemed the more to lean towards his rational habit, in his conduct after this revelation. He said nothing of Westmacott to me, but that very indifference and the absence of a change in his mien dissuaded me from any fears. I concluded that he had given no real thought or feeling to this silly conspiracy. Westmacott was earnest

enough, as I soon discovered by inquiry, but Cherwell had probably forgot already what they had talked about. He was now taken up with the news Ravel had given him, and what it portended. If Grimshaw was here it behoved any that cared for Mistress Alethea to be wary, for that man had been the front of the offence, and it was certain he was in the confidence of his Highness. Ravel had caught him about Durcombe, where he was clearly spying on the inn, and had tracked him privately to a hamlet in the hills some five miles away. Then, being a discreet fellow, back comes he post haste to his master. So two days after this, my lord rode out to this hamlet with a small parcel of others. For he was arguing upon the matter with me in a very quick manner when Westmacott encountered him, and glancing eagerly from one to the other.

“You are still of that resolution, my lord?” he said. Cherwell surveyed him. “Why yes, Mr. Westmacott,” said he, “I never go back upon my word, as my cousin will witness.”

Westmacott came close. “Is it something that ye plot together?” he asked breathless.

“Why yes, we are hatching of somewhat,” says my lord.

“Let me hold the purse, my lord,” says he; “I will be paymaster, if it please your lordship.”

He looked at us so ardently, and was clearly so much rejoiced that Cherwell laughed a little, patting him on the arm.

“We shall bleed you of your guineas soon maybe,” says he. “But an you would help against the Duke, ye shall ride along of me.” With which permission the man was

deeply gratified, and he made one of the company that took the road for Empshill. Ravel was with his master, and I also, though it was a foolish errand on which we were bound. Nothing would suit Cherwell but that we must take this knave and beat his mission out of him, if no other way would serve. Yet from this rash project I dissuaded him, and, as it chanced, it was well we had fetched Westmacott with us. For when we were got near by the hostel in which Grimshaw lay a thought came to Cherwell, and he turned and addressed Westmacott for the first time.

“Look you, sir,” he said, “yonder lies one of his Highness’s creatures, and he is about no good. If you would be serviceable you shall have the task to keep your eyes on him, and bring me word. ’Tis he that betrayed the lord Russell.”

Westmacott leaped from his horse promptly. “That, indeed, shall be my privilege, my lord,” he said ; and he hopped into the inn like a grave cock-sparrow, leaving us in the darkness.

Cherwell broke out a laughing, and turned his horse’s nose about. “I’ll warrant he will crow before dawn, that brisk fellow,” he said, and, seeming mightily pleased, he rode off towards Durcombe.

He was right in his conjecture that Westmacott would show his teeth vigilantly ; for on the second evening from this, and the dark was already well descended, he rode up in a hot wet state, deeply breathing his excitement ; and jumps he from the horse before the door.

“My lord, the fellow moves,” he cries, “he moves ; I doubt not he is upon some abominable business. ’Tis to spy us out for his master. My lord, to horse, to horse !”



“Whither does the knave move?” asked Cherwell.

“Look ye, my lord,” says he, “I have been a burgher of Bristol in that tavern, and I took speech with him in a friendly way, asking the price of taffeta and the like. But I held my eyes on him, and I will aver that he has no suspicions. Presently there comes to him a tall ugly fellow who has him aside, and they talk earnestly together. And after this the one goes away, but the other—Grimshaw they call him—he sits him down and talks affably with me of the state of the country, and presently orders a carriage.

“‘Where is he for?’ I asked of the innkeeper.

“‘He is for Durcombe Manor,’ says he, who was easy with me by reason of the money I had spent. And with that I rode off.”

“Fargus, by God!” cries Cherwell, and cracked his fingers, “there is then some villainy planned.”

“What is it?” asked Westmacott in his emotions. “Have I done well? Shall we be striking of a blow?”

“Why, I doubt not this very night,” quoth my lord, “an ye make haste to follow me.”

There was little delay ere we were, all four of us, once more in the saddle, and this time we were headed for Lady Ellicott’s house, that lay only a mile or more away. Westmacott supposed that Grimshaw had preceded him by half-an-hour, and thus we reckoned that the man had already arrived at the house, and was maybe proceeding with his business, whatever it might be. But my lord rode hard and came up before the gates in an incredible short time in the blackness of the evening. With that he sent Ravel to peep about the grounds and to descry what he might; who presently returned with the news

that a carriage was setting forth, and my lady Ellicott and Grimshaw with Mistress Alethea were the travellers. Then says Cherwell after a silence—

“We have ’em now, and this time it will be strange but I shall devise a better way,” referring to the time when he had stopped the carriage in London.

He said no more, but we stood away, waiting, until the noise of wheels was heard, and the carriage sprang forth of the gates and rolled away into the night. Thereupon we struck after it, and so continued by the open roads, and at a sharp pace. So that soon it was clear that they were bound for Taunton, which amazed us greatly.

“They will not dare carry her off thus,” I said to my lord. “From under the noses of those that lie in the House.”

“No,” said he, “there is something more in this. And where is that damned Fargus?”

But presently we came through a piece of wood and out into an open stretch of heath; and we were no sooner there than there rang from before the sound of voices and of a struggle. Now this spot is very lonely, and standing in a desolate neighbourhood, and afar from any cottage. At once it dawned upon my lord what had happened, and he let out his horse, and, followed by the rest of us, drew up to the scene. Here was a fight in progress between the servants of Lady Ellicott and some tall fellows in the darkness—and the lady screamed and cried out that she was being murdered; and there was also a man’s voice that called angrily, and the clash of swords.

Cherwell sang out merrily, and gliding alongside the

carriage he cut down a man that was reaching through the doors ; at which the others prepared to fall on. But all at once there was an alarm raised, and the ruffians took to their heels, it being so black that we could not determine whither they ran. Therefore, Cherwell steps to the carriage-window, having got from his horse, and he laughs a little.

“What is this?” cried Lady Ellicott’s voice, and I could not say what passion sounded in it.

“Give me a light here,” cries my lord ; and some one of the servants fetched him a lanthorn.

He threw the light into the carriage. “I am glad, indeed, to see you safe, my lady,” says he, “and privileged am I and my friends so to have served you.”

She stared at him in dismay (for I could see her face). “My lord Cherwell!” she cried in surprise ; upon which a savage anger took her expression ; and “What mean ye——” she began, but stopped and drew her breath in deeply, as though to refrain herself from speech.

But my lord laughed again. “My lord Cherwell is privileged to have served you,” he repeated ; and suddenly he cast the light upon the ground, and with his foot turned over the man that lay where he had felled him. “No,” says he. “I hoped it had been.”

At this Grimshaw came out of the dark ring and addressed him very courteously.

“We owe you many thanks, my lord,” said he, “for your timely arrival and gallant aid. Those rascals chose a convenient spot for their assault. Indeed, if the matter of business had not pressed so I should not have urged her ladyship to seek Taunton so late.”

“Ah,” says Cherwell dryly, “you are her ladyship’s adviser, I understand, Mr. Grimshaw.”

“That is so,” says he agreeably; “and there is that which requires Lady Ellicott’s presence in Taunton, concerning the estates.”

“And the presence of her ladyship’s step-daughter,” says Cherwell, with a bow towards the corner of the carriage where the girl sat still, silent and deathlike, gazing on him.

“’Twas on the business of Mistress Alethea Ellicott that we were bound,” says Grimshaw, unruffled.

“Ah well,” says my lord, “these roads are hazardous; and I think your journey must wait overnight.”

“My lord, we have no fears,” says a shrill voice; and this was Sir Mordaunt Pringle, who, it seems, was in the carriage with them, and whom Cherwell recognized for one whom he had seen at Court.

“Nay, but ’tis I that have fears, sir,” he replied. “And I cannot abide that you should so expose your lives. No doubt these villains linger near; and ’tis for that I would offer you an escort back to Durcombe.”

There was instant’s silence after that, and at last my lady Ellicott spoke—

“It is impossible,” she said sharply; “we must push forward. We thank you, my lord.”

My lord raised his hands, and the lanthorn which Ravel now held sparkled upon the diamond ring he always wore, which was his mother’s.

“I protest,” he cried; “you cannot win to Taunton this night. By my faith there is a wind blowing up, and the rain will fall. But I would remind your ladyship of

what comforts rest there at the big house, and from what warmth ye wander."

He loosened the sword that rattled in its scabbard, and drew it with a negligent air, bending the steel between his fingers.

"My lady would have you understand, my lord, that she may not delay," says Sir Mordaunt Pringle in his silly voice.

"Is that so?" says he, speaking very cool. "Well, I should be loath if her ladyship should come to harm. But after all she is mistress of herself and no one calls her jade. I will not interpose upon my lady Ellicott's fancy, my good sir. But 'tis a shame so to expose the young and helpless, and I will even relieve you of that burden."

"What is't ye mean?" cried Lady Ellicott in a scream.

"Why, there sits one should be better at her broidery than in this danger," he said, pointing at Alethea with his sword-hilt. "This lady will come along of me to be sheltered."

Lady Ellicott broke out in a frenzy with many oaths and foul words. She carried herself like a fine lady of that day, which is to say, like any orange wench or slut of the streets.

"Ye stinking toad," she screamed at him. "But ye dare not."

"Indeed," says my lord, smiling quickly, "I dare anything in the service of your ladyship, and for to protect her kin."

"By God," she cries, "you would abduct."

"Nay, I would shield the innocent from a rape of the High Toby," said my lord with a pleasant grin.

“Sir Mordaunt,” she spluttered, “Sir Mordaunt, would ye stand so and see a virgin ravished, ye spiritless louse?”

Sir Mordaunt stepped out. “Nay, nay; not I,” he cried. “My lord shall yet know me, and with whom he deals. He shall be learned who is master here, and that what her ladyship says is law. ’Sblood, my lord, so shall you.”

My lord paid him no heed, but thrust in an arm and took the girl by the hand. Yet she seemed to shrink away, still staring on him out of large and terrified eyes. She appeared as one fastened upon a vision, from which she might not wrest herself.

“Come, come,” says he, “you shall sleep better, I vow, where I shall lead you, than there in Taunton.”

She made no resistance, for all her shrinking, and he put his quick live arm about her waist and pulled her swiftly from the carriage.

For a moment he stood with the girl in his arms, her feet dragging upon the earth, and between the fires of that evil-tongued woman and the silly mincing Pringle.

“You may drive forth to Taunton, an ye will,” he said calmly, “but Mistress Alethea and I abide elsewhere;” and turning upon Pringle with a sudden savageness, “Hold your tongue, you oaf,” he cried, “or I will string ye to the traces of your horses.”

The next moment he had leaped upon his horse with the girl before him resting against his breast, and shaking the reins rode forthright into the darkness.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HISTORY OF MY LORD'S STRANGE WEDDING

My lord, as I believe, was driven to this strange and hazardous act upon the conclusions of the moment. The purpose of that infamous woman once revealed to him, he was carried forward by his own weight, and what happened was natural to him. I suppose he saw that he might not be for ever stopping coaches and throwing obstacles in the way of an abduction; and that if he were to end the whole business it were well to do so boldly. There was Lady Ellicott with a most cunning plot whereby to manage what she wanted, and witnesses, in Grimshaw and Pringle, to say nothing of the servants, to protest how hotly they were engaged. This (so I conceive) incited my lord to what he did, though what he intended further, or how his conduct would be shaped, I dared not think. It may be that he knew not himself, though, being of so nimble a wit, he may very well have determined there and then upon the whole course of his behaviour.

My lord rode so hard, despite the double burden, that we who followed in wonder and anxiety, never reached him till he was got to the Inn at Durcombe. But here we came up with him, and he dismounted from his

reeking horse, and stood in the door with the girl on his arm.

"My lord, my lord, you ha' betrayed me," cries Westmacott, panting. "I call you to witness I am no party to this seizure."

"Anthony," said I, being greatly disturbed, "Anthony, Anthony, what do you?"

But he said nothing, only I saw that his eyes were dancing brightly, and a slight smile sucked in his underlip. He lifted the girl into the inn, and we two followed into the hall, where he set her in a chair.

"I pray you, mistress, to compose yourself," he said. "Yet I fear the wind has blown away your breath."

She made no answer, looking at him only, her breath coming deeply, and wearing a bewildered, frightened air.

"Anthony," said I again, "to what would you commit yourself? This is folly past madness."

He laughed faintly.

"Are ye come to yourself, mistress?" he asked of her softly.

"My lord ——" she answered, but she got no further, with her trembling agitation.

"My lord, my lord," struck in Westmacott again, "you ha' cheated me. I will have none of this abduction. What have you done?"

"Peace, fool," says Cherwell. "I have but saved your gossip, Grimshaw, from the devourers."

I went up to him, where he stood before the ingle-corner, with one hand resting on his hip.

"Cousin," said I gravely, "you do wrong in this. You have fallen into that very sin which offended you in others. This is no less than an abduction or a rape."



“I care not what name you put upon it,” said he.

“Nay, but you should care,” I urged, “and here is what should abash you. How will this snatching look to other eyes?”

“I know no eyes but my own,” said he curtly.

“True,” said I, “for you are a grown man and a strong. Yet what of this maid?” and I cast upon her a look. “There she sits, helpless, and at your mercy. Unstained to-day; yet how shall she appear to-morrow? I ask you, cousin, what story of her will go about, and in what words she will be whispered from the Bristol Channel to London Town? What would you make of her future, you who thus despoil her of her fair name by this frenzied and cruel act?”

My lord rang a summons for the innkeeper abruptly.

“She shall lie here to-night,” he said sharply, “in the keeping of the mistress of this house. And whatsoever damage she take from such neighbourhood shall avail nothing to harm her.”

“Fie,” cried I. “You would soil her name.”

He turned fiercely upon me. “Her name,” he said, “matters nought save to him she shall marry. No one else hath a right in it. And I tell ye, sir, that she who shall be wife to me shall make of her name what she chooses or that which I shall choose.”

“What?” I cried in an amaze, astounded at this news.

But the girl, losing of a quickness all her colour, rose like a tall lily, and stood trembling.

“My lord, my lord ——” she cried, and again she ceased; but there rolled in her voice a deep emotion, and she was shaken; yet the shadows upon her face I might not disengage. Cherwell took her hand, and,

the innkeeper being now come, conducted her to the door.

“I leave this lady in your woman’s care,” said he in his most commanding tones, “and as she deal by that trust, so shall I deal by you.”

With that the fellow, being greatly impressed by this manner, bowed, and was for opening the door when Cherwell laid his hand upon the knob and himself turned it, bowing profoundly as the girl passed, still white and wondering.

“Ye shall rest where ye will, mistress, and sup as ye will,” said he to her softly, “and whatsoever ye will, that I will also.”

Then he closed the door after her, and came forward, staring strangely at me. But the little Westmacott had quickly taken a notion of what this meant, being shrewd enough despite of his country sequestration, and he stood up before my lord, comporting himself very excellently.

“My lord,” said he, “if I am right, there is some further tale behind this.”

“You have a long head, Mr. Westmacott,” answered my lord, “and I would not endeavour to deceive ye.”

“I know your repute, my lord,” says he, “and this I say, that I trust you. I have put my safety in your hands.”

“Then shall this content you, Mr. Citizen,” says Cherwell, “that you have this night aimed a blow at the ribs of the Duke.”

Westmacott spread out his fingers with an eager gesture.

“I ask nothing of you, my lord,” said he. “I beg none of your secrets; but what you say that I accept.

If so be I have struck this blow, then am I honoured by your confidence and the mission you have entrusted to me."

"By heaven, sir, but I think you be a better gentleman than most," said Cherwell warmly; and after a pause he added, "And what more blows you desire you shall see given. For I take it that we shall have the wasps upon us this very night."

He nodded in my face, as though he would provoke me with his malicious tongue; but I said nothing.

"There will be an attack upon the inn?" cried Westmacott, in his surprise.

"It is like enough," replied Cherwell indifferently; and of a truth I was of the same opinion, for such an outrage as was now marked against my lord was not one to be condoned, and it would be strange if Lady Ellicott, in her fury, did not make a sally to oppose and confound him.

That fell soon enough, for the house was scarcely yet in darkness, when there came a loud knocking upon the door, which, being repeated, fetched the innkeeper down in his night-cap. He knew (poor wretch) what girl he had gotten in his charge, and he was shaking in his fear to offend as well as with the terror of violence. But ere he had reached the door, my lord appeared on the stairway, holding a pistol.

"Shoot back those bolts, fellow," said he, "and if it is, maybe, a friend of mine I will have speech with him that knocks so late."

The shivering landlord thrust back the bolts, and pulled the door ajar.

"Who is there?" says he.

But there was no answer to that question, only the door was thrust wider open, so that he was jammed against the wall, and several gentlemen, with one or two on horseback, were seen under a swinging lanthorn.

“Landlord,” says a harsh voice, “you have a lady in this house. Go rouse her on the instant, as there is one here that would speak with her. And rouse me too my lord Cherwell, saying that Edward, Lord Bohun, is come, and has a word for him.”

“The message is needless,” calls my lord from the stairway, “for the Earl of Cherwell is here, Edward, Lord Bohun.”

That sentence drew their eyes, and my lord Bohun, seizing a lanthorn from his servant, stepped into the inn and held it up before him, striving to discern where Cherwell stood. But the light being thus between them, he was not able. My lord then called for a light himself, and he set it behind him, so that his figure was thrown out against the blackness, and his shadow moved gigantic on the walls. A man that had followed Lord Bohun over the threshold fell back, seeing, it maybe, the monstrous obsession of this form and the pistol leaping in the shaking flame. But Lord Bohun stayed with his great bulk, and says he bluntly, as was his nature—

“What I must say shall keep, my lord, until to-morrow; but I will have the girl of you.”

“You had ever an eye to a wench, my lord,” says Cherwell in return. “But I have none of yours with me, I protest.”

“Come, my lord,” cried Bohun roughly, “you shall not palter there. There is but one way, and that you shall take, by God.”

“And, by God, that shall I not take,” cried my lord, suddenly flaming forth, and stepping down the stairs.

Bohun drew his weapon, and my lord, thrusting by his pistol, held the long thin steel of his rapier in his hand, passing it through his fingers angrily. Suddenly they fell on, and with an oath Bohun gave way, his big body thumping against the wall.

“Cease, cease, my lords,” said some one. “This is no place in which to squabble, and in so great a darkness,” and, another of the party seizing Lord Bohun, this same man, who was very courteous, addressed Cherwell, as he remained with his naked sword. “We are no assassins, my lord, nor are we of the main toby. But we would exact from you a certain pledge, that the lady is not in this house.”

“I give no pledge nor promise but to those I will,” answered my lord, still holding forth his weapon.

“Come, my lord,” said the other sharply. “Do you not see that what we ask is but a formal undertaking, and——”

He ceased abruptly, but Cherwell paid him no heed, sweeping his glances out of the door where the others of the party waited. I think he expected an assault in force, and there was but his sword to oppose them, with mine and Westmacott’s for what they were worth. There was now a tiny silence, and then the man who had spoken turned away with a hoist of his shoulders. I could not see his face for the uncertain light, but he was spare and tall and very elegant, and spoke with a fashionable voice.

“Come,” he said, “there is no one here. The land-

lord has taken a new wench to his kitchen. My lady Ellicott was mistook. We will not favour my lord's drouth for a quarrel."

He spoke very dryly, but the better part of those with him appeared to murmur, and I heard Sir Mordaunt Pringle's voice raised in a denial.

"'Slife, my dear Trayle, I protest she is there—the little witch is there. She was drawn thither, as my man saw. We may not leave her. 'Sbody, they will tear her name in tatters to-morrow. No, Lard, no; we must not leave her."

The man addressed as Trayle laughed softly. "Pouf!" he said, "a carrion crow minds not stale meat," and though his tone was quiet, there was that in his accent which rang most unpleasant in the ears, as though he spake darkly of what was not openly confessed. I think, indeed, he was referring in some ugly fashion to the Duke himself. Trayle, as that was his name (for he was second son to Lord Polden), was no doubt wise enough in his withdrawal; for Cherwell was in the black mad mood to fight, and fight he would, even though there had been no other sword to help him. The party drew off, my lord Bohun swearing abominably at his wound, and cursing them for fools to have brought him out from his cards. After which, the noise they made receding and ceasing, my lord walked quietly up the stairs and entered his room without any further attention.

Of what followed the next morning I was not a witness, nor can I speak with any certain knowledge. Yet what I write I had long afterwards from her that was then my lady, who held, nevertheless, a modest reticence in her narrative. It seems that my lord came,

approaching her very softly quite early, and, says he, delaying not to reach his point, but very cautiously—

“Madam, that which I required of you some little while since, that must I ask of you again.”

“What is it you ask?” she answered, beginning to tremble.

“You have denied me the once,” said he, “will you deny me again?”

On that she cast down her eyes, being greatly disturbed.

“You know not what you would do, my lord,” she said.

“I know that I would have a ravishing wife,” says he, smiling.

“Had you my message, my lord?” she asked in a low voice.

“’Tis not for pretty misses to measure peril and confront it,” said he lightly. “I had your message, sweet, and blessed you for it.”

She looked him full in the face, and says my lady—  
“His eyes did pass through me, as though he saw me not.”

“None would woo thus,” she cried with some entreaty in her tones, “that would woo sincerely.”

“Madam,” he cried, bowing very grandly, “I have the honour to require your answer.”

This was to say—“There speaks my truth in that”; yet the girl, no doubt, desired something more. She was for a little still; then

“I must give you nay, my lord,” she said, quavering.

My lord’s brow contracted, for he could not brook opposition.

“Bethink you in what position you stand, lady,” he

said. "It is among hazards that you walk, and the peril of your honour."

Suddenly the flame sprang into her face, and she clenched her hands. "Oh," she cried fiercely, "what shame am I brought down to! How low I lie! I that have the pride of the Ellicotts, and whose frail body is continent of all their blood. There is none left beside me, and here I stand your prisoner, or else the captive of dishonour. I am but a girl, and there have been none to befriend me. Nay, even that fortune which I shall have has bred me ill will and enemies. But what think you, my lord, are the feelings which animate a poor helpless maid who is stood up for the cock-shy of evil thoughts and base passions? I burn with my shame. Yea, I cannot endure to be so bandied about among men and upon the lips and tongues of others. My lord, my lord, I would God that I were dead!"

My lord started away at the heat of this quick outburst, and looked on her in a kindly fashion. "You have been sorely wronged," he said vehemently, "but you shall heal all those pains in marriage. I offer you an honourable name."

"I have one," said she, "that is still such."

"And will it be so to-morrow?" he asked.

She broke forth again passionately. "You wring my heart, my lord. But there shall no dishonour touch me. I shall not be assoiled. I, Alethea Ellicott, have said it."

My lord looked on still with a compassionate gaze.

"Child," he said, "you speak like a child. Nay, I think it is in your nursery that I see you snatching and fighting with your nurse, and breaking into tears under



the captor's hand. You will be pressed so under the yoke. You must bow that head."

"I will not make this tie with you," she said, sobbing. "I pray you, my lord, to bear with me, and to provoke me not."

My lord was something softened, but he abated not from his persistence.

"Look you," said he gently, "I have given you such a name now as will pass over the countryside. Would you make me your ruin?"

She ceased her sobbing, and drew herself up. "My lord," she said, "you have saved me not now only but often. There is none that I honour like unto you. And whatsoever shall be said let it be said; for it shall never cross my tongue to make a denial of what all men may think of me. Yea, my lord, but what I hear of that I shall bear with pride, rejoicing to have known one so noble, and thinking no shame even that his name should be so cast with mine."

My lord took a quick step forward in his amazement, and he seized her hand, pressing it hard, while his eyes kindled.

"I will not leave you to that fate," he said quickly. "Your name shall be cast with mine, but not in that way. It shall be so, I vow to God."

For the space of some minute or so there was silence; only his eyes sparkled on her, his hand constrained her, his mind overmatched her.

Then she sighed, and losing all the vestiges of her colour withdrew her fingers.

"So be it, my lord," she ended in a low voice. "I cannot struggle with you. 'Tis you that have fetched

this upon your head, you in your hospitable pity and or your great authority."

Such considerations as she pondered my lord Cherwell never heeded at all, as I know ; for having gained this end he was as merry as a kitten, and bade both Westmacott and myself drink to his lady's beauty.

"She is a handsome creature, Hilary," says he joyously. "By the Lord, she is handsome, and comes of a tall clean race. But whatever she be she shall be my lady, and you shall drink to her or taste my sword," and he laughed pleasantly.

Very early a coach was brought to the door, and the girl was set therein, while Cherwell and I rode behind. He was for picking up a parson, he said, and would scour the country for one.

"You will maybe meet with some refusals," said I, for news might very well be spread by this time, and my lady Ellicott was known hereabouts.

"Oh, damn any Jack Parson," said he. "They shall do what I wish, or I will send to Dulsiebridge."

Between Mattingby and Croxhill there stood a little inn, and before this Cherwell suddenly pulled in his horse, and glanced at the door with a sharp frown. Then a comical look came on his face.

"I had forgot, but we shall need another witness, cousin," says he.

"How is that ?" said I.

"Oh, well, 'tis my whim," says he, and leaping from horseback with a bound he ran lightly into the tavern. There was an angry cry and the noise of some glass falling, and presently after my lord re-appeared holding in his arms a little struggling man.

"'Tis Grimshaw," says he, laughing. "Give me a hand, Hilary. An excellent witness, I swear."

And flinging the fellow across his saddle he mounted briskly, and rode off, shouting with laughter, as he restrained the frightened efforts of the man. In this ludicrous way did we come to Croxhill and I fetched out the parson, who made some demur, thinking here was a mad party.

"Get to ; get to," cried Cherwell impatiently. "I have a witness here that will not wait."

The parson, hearing his name, made no more ado, but hurried into the church, and Cherwell set Grimshaw to watch, with me by his side. The attorney had come to himself, and was in his own possession once more, though still mightily perturbed in his appearance. Yet he showed no anger and was calm enough. Presently, however, when the parson had read a little way into the service, he jumped up.

"I protest," he cried, "against this marriage. These bonds are not to be forged. The lady is a minor, and the ward of my lady Ellicott of Durcombe."

Cherwell turned him about. "Hold your tongue, ye little worm," he said sharply, "or I will have ye flung at the windows," and he commanded the parson to proceed in an angry voice ; for the poor man was much fluttered by this, and evidently knew not what to make of it.

"But—" says he, beginning to stammer ; and dropped his book in an abrupt movement of my lord's arm.

Cherwell stooped and picked it up.

"Here," he says, "find ye the place, and either you or I shall read it. Ha' you lost your tongue?" and he thrust the book under his nose, pointing at the word.

The parson continued in a trembling voice, and when he had reached the phrase my lord slipped his mother's ring from his hand, and set it on the girl's that was now my lady, repeating what the parson quavered.

At that, and upon those words, I, that was by her, perceived her, who had stood there so white and silent, to sigh deeply, whilst ever so little a colour tinged her; and the sigh was, as it might be, of relief, or of resignation, or even of regret, but, as I fancied, the first of these. Finally my lord took off his hat when they were got out of church, and bowed to her.

"Madam," said he, "you are my wife, and her that has so honoured me it is my charge and my privilege to defend. There is none that dare intermeddle with her whose name is now mine."

He drew himself up proudly, but my lady Cherwell said nothing; only she looked on him with her soft eyes. Of the last of this mad ceremony I saw nothing, for I went back to the inn presently in the company of Ravel, whom we encountered. Yet what I set down here is true in every particular, as I heard afterwards all that passed. Ravel had met us with a piece of information concerning the villain Fargus, whom he declared to have seen in a certain spot. So my lord bade him go back and wait, saying he would come himself shortly and execute the rogue. With that he dismissed us, though we had supposed him to be following after with his lady to the inn.

"No," said he, "I must first publish this match. It will be of a particular interest to some at Durcombe Manor. I should think shame to rob so many gentlemen and ladies of this prime news. And would you have me

neglect her ladyship? I am to acquaint her of what honour has been done me; I am to behave like a proper son-in-law."

Having given commands to the coachman, he rode off, wearing a satisfied smile, and while I got back to the inn, these two continued on their foolish journey.

My lord's coach drew up before the doors of the manor-house about noon, and my lord leaped from his horse and made a ringing at the bell. When he was admitted he had the coach opened and his lady helped to alight, very pale but quiet, and a sudden determination shining in her eyes. Thereupon, with the lady's hand in his arm, he demanded where Lady Ellicott might be, and learning from the astonished footboy, that the whole company were assembled within the inner hall, he waved back the man and passed on to that chamber. On his first entrance there was an instant silence, and afterwards a little buzzing of voices, while Lady Ellicott who stood near to him turned pink through her colour, and made as though to rush forward. Some one, however, put a hand to her and held her back, whispering a warning.

"What is this, my lord?" she asked at length in a high angry voice. "I see you are come to bring home that which you are done with. These ruins are not for us. Keep what you ha' fouled, in God's name." This she said, having no suspicion of what had happened, and wondering, no doubt, what had precipitated this change in Cherwell.

"I will keep that what is mine," says my lord in answer, "and that, I will have your ladyship know, is what I am only begun with."

"What!" she cried, bewildered but sneering. "You

fetch me back my daughter with those haughty airs, ye who are no better than a ravisher, and shall be called to account for this."

"Nay," said he, smiling, "I fetch you back my wife."

Lady Ellicott started, and but for Trayle's hand upon her would have flown at him. Instead she broke into curses, and pitched her filth at the girl and my lord together, shrieking that it was a lie. But my lord heeded her not, and looked about him.

"I will have this honourable company to learn that here stands the Countess of Cherwell," said he slowly, "and that she is come home to the house of her fathers, where she hath a right indeed to take a farewell."

At that Lady Ellicott chafed, but Trayle's face was without any expression—he merely watched; while Lord Bohun with his arm in a sling broke out laughing rudely.

"I like that spirit," says he. "Gad, my lord, but that is the point to tickle 'em. Stab me, but it is a rare play."

"My lord," said Cherwell, turning to him, "if there is anything between us, I trust to your lordship to acquaint me."

"Faith, no," says Bohun, grinning. "'Tis but a prick, and I am on your side, by the Lord, I am."

But now Lady Ellicott, being a clever woman, but of a hot temper, showed a new spirit, and conducted herself very admirably. She came forward, and seeming not too friendly, as was wise.

"I thought not to have for husband to my daughter such an arrant feather-wit as you, my lord," she said, with a shrug of her shoulders. "But an it has happened, so it is," and turning she called to the serving-man, "Ho, there, Ambrose, a room for my lord and my lady."

“Madam,” says Cherwell then, without a smile on his face, “I thank this excellent company for their friendly congratulations, and you for your good welcome. We will not discommode you long, but of a truth my lady has made a journey, and she wearies. ’Tis of your courtesy to find her a privy chamber.”

Lady Ellicott said nothing, but made him a bow, a gleam passing over her face; and so the two walked a little way apart, and stood there.

“I will leave you in trust here,” says Cherwell at once, “here in the house to which you have a right.”

“Whither would you go?” she asked swiftly, starting in alarm.

“There is one that requires justice—a bad rogue, who cumpers the ground,” said Cherwell lightly. “But I will return to fetch ye hence.”

“Tarry not, my lord,” said she earnestly, “for ye have great enemies.”

“I have a beautiful wife,” says he, smiling on her negligently.

She clasped her hands together. “Aye, but what have you gotten for yourself?” she asked quickly. “A peril and no recompense for it.”

“There is one,” he said in a softer voice, “that shall adorn my house and prove a fine tall mother to my sons.”

She turned aside, of a heightened colour, and said she tremulously, “I pray that in no way that shall please my lord shall I be wanting in whatsoever he desires.”

Cherwell kissed her hands, and turned and walked through the guests that were looking at them both, and so passed out of the door with salutations.

## CHAPTER XII

WHAT FOLLOWED AFTER THE SECOND ABDUCTION, WITH  
AN ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT AT BASING

AT this moment my lord Cherwell appeared upon the pitch of a triumph, and there was no question but he thought so himself. He had considered the girl but little in this final act ; rather he was fulfilled with a glee to have worsted her treacherous friends, who had also grown to be his foes. When he rode to the inn from the manor he showed many symptoms of delight, and was merry and mad together, declaring that Ravel should lead him to Fargus, whom he would spit like a fowl. He had foiled the Duke, which pleased him out of measure ; and he had set Lady Ellicott a-screaming. What weight his Highness had set upon this affair my lord did not know, though it was clear to others. The Duke, indeed, had so greatly withheld his passion that it had at length broke forth, and had committed him to rashness, who was by nature prudent. It was said (and I believe the story true) that he had come to such a height of feeling, that he would have set my lady where Anne Hyde had stood, had that been possible. His infatuation had enlarged, and he had found a warm supporter in Lady Ellicott. This



woman, being of a natural viciousness, was not hard to be turned, and moreover she saw herself no longer of any account at Court. The girl was her bait, and having the control of her fortunes, she was the more easily able to affect her. To stand in such relation to the mistress and counsellor of a king—that was her ambition; as it has often been the aim of others. The illustrations of history tempted her, and but for my lord she might by this time have gained her end. His interposition, therefore, embittered and enraged her, and she was driven by her disappointment to a greater length. Whether the Duke was mainly responsible for what fell now and afterwards it would be impossible to say. To my lord Cherwell his Highness was ever the chief mark of his wrath, and he would hear of no other interpretation. With what warmth the Duke had pressed this whole affair is plain from the testimony of Tyrconnel and others that were in the secret. It seemed to them no harm that a prince should so pursue a helpless child; indeed, one at least avowed to me that he deemed she but fled to be pursued. But the Duke's orders may have stopped upon this side of what my lord supposed, and to Lady Ellicott alone the treachery may have been due. Her very calmness under his great provocation in the manor-house showed that she plotted him some evil. It is impossible to separate these responsibilities and to refer to each a proper share of guilt. It is enough that the abominable deed was done (whosoever gave the orders), and that within a few hours only of my lord's going.

My lord Cherwell rode back to the manor-house late in the evening, having met no signs of Fergus, but well enough content, and, as Ravel says, singing of a song

cheerily. He descended, and throwing the reins to his man, commanded an entrance to the house. It was his purpose that my lady should ride a pillion with him to the inn, whence they would set forth for Dulsiebridge on the morrow. The serving-men making an attempt to dissuade him, he knocked them aside and walked up the hall where the guests were assembled. The time being now gone past supper, Lady Ellicott sat at the end of the board, and she had a flushed face, with a giggling manner, staring and laughing and pointing at my lord when he came in, for she was the first to see him.

“Why, my lord,” she called in a shrill voice, “where is your lady? I should ha’ thought two such turtles would have had their beaks together by this.”

Cherwell gazed at her sharply. “Where is my wife?” said he.

“She hath no stomach for to sup,” cries Lady Ellicott in a tipsy fashion. “Oh, lard, no; she is considering or something else—is my lady.”

“Where does she lie?” asked Cherwell, flashing a look on her.

“I am no keeper of my lady the Countess,” says the woman, angry in her wine, but handsome enough through her paint. “Slidikins, you cock, mind your own hens. Maybe she sleepeth, or hath an ache,” and she burst out laughing with a coarse gesture, at which some there joined in her merriment.

But at this a dark thought took hold of Cherwell, and he made a step nearer, menacing her with his hot eyes.

“I left my lady Cherwell in your hands,” said he in a quiet voice, “and in the custody and safety of her father’s house that is hers. I demand you tell me where she is.”

Lady Ellicott raised her brows. "Why, she should ha' been with you," she answered. "Sure, she went to the inn to join you," and laughed again.

My lord was for a moment silent, for he suspected now at last what had happened, and he looked round upon the faces one by one. Some of these showed amusement, and some amazement, and others were blank with alarm.

"Will ye not sit and sup?" cried Lady Ellicott, waving her hand to the table. "Ye are weary, my lord, and have ridden hard."

She got no farther than this, for my lord suddenly broke in, still in a very quiet voice.

"Is there none here that can tell me of my lady Cherwell, whither she is gone?" he asked.

But there was silence on their part, and many had risen from the table, looking for something to happen, and stood watching. He took the handle of his sword in his hand and passed among them swiftly, his face turned of a white, his violet eyes gleaming like the sheen on steel, and his head starting this way and that at every tiny sound. At the faintest movement or stir his gaze sprang upon a face and fastened there like a tiger.

"Where is my wife?" says he, walking thus between them. "Where is my wife? My lord Bohun, know you whither is my lady taken?"

"Faith," whispered Trayle to one that told me this, "here is a perilous man—he holds himself too quiet."

Cherwell stayed before him at this sound. "My wife?" says he. "Know you where they have hid my lady?"

Trayle shrugged his shoulders. "My lord, I was told that she had driven hence to the inn."

But Bohun, who had drunk very deep, thumped his

great fist upon the oak. "By God!" he cried, "this goes too far. This is damnable scurvy practice! God damn me, 'tis so."

My lord kept very still and silent now, but merely fingered a button upon his coat, his eyes alone ranging over the faces.

"I thank you for your courtesy," said he slowly. "'Tis good in you, madam, to return me such nice consideration. I will remember it as a gentle act of friendship. One of my blood," says he, "is not used to forget. I thank you for your grace, madam, and this honourable company. Yet you have said not where my lady lies."

"I know naught, my lord," said Lady Ellicott boldly, yet changing her colour somewhat. "Maybe you shall find her at the inn. Maybe she waits you there, my lord."

"Maybe," says he in the same voice, "but it may be also that she looks for me elsewhere. I will keep tryst with my lady, madam, as you should very well guess of me."

"Lord," she cried in an uncomfortable tone, "you hint at me. I will not have you insinuate against me."

"Madam, I have warned you before that you were treading in perilous ways," said he smoothly. "I warned you once, and you despised that word. The time is past now for warning, for the peril is here."

"What mean you?" she said, appearing angry.

"Your fate is designed; your danger is upon you," he said.

"Come, come, my lord," said Trayle, stepping forward. "The devil! would you threaten a lady? There is that here to stop you, if your honour will not," and he made a gesture towards his side.

But Cherwell turned his eyes on him quickly. "Nay,"

he said, "I have no quarrel with you, sir ; and I threaten not any woman. I but advise this lady of what is already destined. There is none here that I threaten ; there is but the one against whom I am charged. I make war upon one man, and him I will call to account. But it shall so happen that others may be entangled in his fortunes, and in his overthrow shall others also be destroyed, even this lady."

Lady Ellicott, who was now a-tremble, cried out in a voice in which there entered a quavering laugh—" 'Tis strange words you use, my lord."

But said Trayle, "Who is this you speak of?"

" 'Tis James Stewart, who is styled Duke of York," says Cherwell, as slowly as before, "and maybe 'tis a name you know."

But at that some cried out—"His Highness!" and "Hush, hush!" . . . "You speak treason."

"Treason!" cried my lord quickly. "I know no such word. But I know one, and that is treachery—and he that wrongeth Anthony Heriot shall pay for that wrong until the uttermost farthing,"—with which he turned on his heel, and, very pale and fevered, walked swiftly from the house.

My lord was not like to let things rest so. He was in a passion to strike at the Duke, and he might hardly be contained ; for of a truth the dissuasion fell to me.

"The Duke," says he, when he entered the inn, having ridden furiously from the Manor, "the Duke," says he, "has made a diversion."

"What mean you, Anthony?" said I, who was alarmed at his tone ; he spoke in such deathly calmness. "Where is my lady?" said I.

“His Highness knows,” says he.

“She has not been taken?” I cried, suspecting what had happened.

“Aye,” says he slowly. “The Duke has ravished my lady Cherwell away to debauch her. He has declared war. Am I not a humble subject of this realm, Hilary, and who am I that I dare refuse to accept his challenge? I am well quit of the woman,” says he, meaning Lady Ellicott. “I would rather fight a man, and the higher he stands the heavier shall I pull him down.”

“What would you do?” I asked him in dismay at this news.

My lord stirred suddenly from his slow and bitter mood, and his glance shot flames.

“He hath taken away my wife,” he cried in a voice of exceeding rage and passion, “and I take God to witness that I will pull down this James Stewart in ruins—that I will not rest nor cease until that man is brought and humbled in the dust.”

“Hush! Anthony!” said I. “You speak against one that shall be King to-morrow.”

“What matters it?” he answered roughly. “His blood is rotten in him; his flesh stinketh. An he be King,” says he, “it maybe that he shall go the way of his father—if so I choose.”

Nor could I move him from that terrible madness; yet what I could that I did; and he stayed in the inn for two days more, during which inquiries were spread about the country. But no news came of my lady; she and her coach, if so be she had set out in a coach, as Lady Ellicott said, had vanished; and there was no trace of her remaining, any more than if she had been rapt up into Heaven

on an instant, or enchanted away into faery. At the end of the two days, then, my lord made ready to return, and, summoning Westmacott, gave him commands.

“I go to London,” said he, “to secure a party and defences. Tarry ye in Taunton, and do your work.”

Westmacott protested very eagerly how he would gladly do this, and that he looked for much from my lord’s visit.

“What do you go for?” I asked Cherwell.

“I go to pursue my fate,” he says shortly. “This country is weary of Jack Fools and Cupids. I will set this same London Town by the ears, as ye shall presently hear.”

From this I knew he had some design which he kept guarded, and I was to learn what this might be soon enough. I parted from my lord at Dulsiebridge, leaving him to ride for Town, and that night he lay at Basing.

The time was drawing towards the close of September, and the nights fell damp or frosty, so that a fire was burning in the small inn. A little after he had arrived a man rode up, his horse all a-lather, and got down before the tavern, entering the one public room. My lord sate still before the fire, with his toes to the embers, sunk in meditation, and he saw nothing of the stranger, paying no heed to any sounds. But Ravel marked him, and being of a constant inquisitiveness, struck up an acquaintance with him. He was an ugly heavy fellow, and said that he was from Southampton, where he had been to tend a venture; but Ravel considered him to be no merchant and was puzzled with him. Still he was a friendly fellow, and paid his reckoning and Ravel’s too with a generous hand. Now it so happened that when my lord was got to bed, being very tired, Ravel also made a feint of

sleeping, but presently he was minded to court a kitchen-wench that was in the house, and getting up he made his way to another place where she had appointed to see him. Here Ravel, who was a rare liar, and, indeed, spoke no truth to any unless to his master, though he was for ever talking, filled the slut's ears, it must be thought, with wonderful tales of his master, saying that he knew for certain he was the Devil, so wild was he and glaring. And after this talk and some natural dalliance the two came to grow noisier, and, their liquor being finished, Ravel persuaded her to fetch him more from the cellar. The wench pouted and would nothing without him, crying she was affrighted; and so, a lanthorn being lit, the two proceeded down the stairs upon the lower landing. Here there was some jest between them, and a struggle followed; Ravel thrusting an arm about the hussy, and she giggling and resisting him. In the midst of it all back goes she with a bump against a door, which giving way, she topples into the room beyond with a shriek. Ravel had the lanthorn, and what was his consternation to perceive that it was my lord's chamber into which they had thus rudely broken. The girl lay upon the floor, looking much alarmed now, but 'twas not on her that Ravel stared; for there was that in the room that made him cry out and shake as if he had been the wench herself. What he saw was no other than the big fellow with whom he had supped that night, and he stood over the bed where my lord lay, as Ravel swore, with a knife in his hand.

At the noise of their entrance the man turned, first with an ugly frown, and next with a look of terror. He ran on that same instant from the bed and towards the open



door, ere Ravel had his wits. My lord, however, was ever quick to act, and the sounds had awoke him instantly. He sat up, and seeing one that ran, emptied a pistol on him, so that the fellow, being peppered in the hinder parts as he fled, fell over the wench with a yell, and came to the floor, where he lay cursing and groaning. At this the ado and the noise grew apace, and the people in the tavern were roused. But my lord, sitting in his bed, pointed a finger at the floor, where the girl was pinned down by the man's body.

“Take away that rubbish,” says he to Ravel shortly. “’Tis a scandal that a man may not sleep peaceably who has ridden so far.” And then seeing that the one of the twain was a woman—“What does that grimalkin in my room?” said he. “Put her forth, rogue; put her forth.”

And Ravel obeying him without a word, Cherwell lay back again in his bed and went to sleep without any concern. Yet the episode might not rest there, and my lord learned the next day what his visitor had intended. The man himself, who was grievously pained in his after parts, and kept abed perforce, vowed himself honest, and that Ravel was mistook. He swore he was an honourable merchant who had no need to rob or steal, and that he had by an error entered the wrong room. There was no argument against him save Ravel's eyes, and it was declared that he had been tippling with the girl; so that in the end nothing was done, and my lord went on to London. Yet there were those, of whom I am one, who did not doubt from what direction this attempt came. It is possible that my lord also guessed, but he never referred to it, and if he guessed he cared not. Certainly it did

not interpose upon his plans, as it might well have done. For here was evidence that he had enemies who would use all unworthy and dishonourable means to strike at him, and would strike secretly and by base hands. There was a party that maintained how the King and his brother were not subject to the common laws of the realm, nor could be bound by the usual code of honour. 'Tis an evil doctrine that has wrought much mischief; but it was practised by many, as for example in the plot that was formed by gentlemen of the Court to keep the Duke from his marriage with Anne Hyde.<sup>1</sup> And the fallacy once admitted, there is no depth to which those who follow it may not be brought. Of the instigation of this assassin I have never had any doubt, more especially from what befel later, as I shall relate in due time.

In London my lord took up his quarters in the old hostel which he frequented.

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton gives a full account of this infamous plot in *Memoirs of Count Grammont*, Chap. VIII.—EDITOR.

## CHAPTER XIII

### OF THE EXTRAVAGANCES AT SOUTHWARK, AND THE WOLVES OF CLODIUS

No sooner was my lord arrived in Town than he set himself to his purpose, which was to pursue the war against his Highness. There was not one tittle of evidence to show that the Duke was author of the abduction ; indeed, it was impossible that he should have been, owing to the distance from London. If it had been so my lord could have proceeded in the High Court. Yet I do not think he thought of this. He had his schemes laid and followed them craftily, but with a mad recklessness notwithstanding. He spoke no word to the King, who welcomed him kindly, and even encountered the Duke without more than a bow. Charles, on his part, had learned what had happened, and, being very indolent and also sick at that time, took little account of it. Indeed, he but turned away from it with his satirical remark that “James should be the better pleased that my lord had been so great a fool as to wed ; since what he pursued with danger before was now very secure.” But concerning the disappearance of the lady he uttered no word, nor did my lord to him. Yet I

think his silence was graver than the most passionate outbreak.

My lord Cherwell went about his task in another way. He straightway sought Shepherd, the man who had the wine-shop in which the Rye House plot was formed. This silent and inscrutable man he questioned boldly, demanding whither certain fellows had fled. But Shepherd professed to know nothing of them, saying he kept a shop to sell wines, and that any gentleman was free to come there. He cared nothing for any one's opinions.

Says Cherwell—"This is very well, and I make no doubt you are a loyal subject. Yet you love not the Pope, and you have a fear of his Highness."

Shepherd eyed him, as if to inquire what he knew, for he had saved his skin till now by pleading his ignorance of what went forward at those meetings.

"I think you remember me now," says my lord.

Shepherd shook his head. "Your lordship's face is one that I could not but recall," he said. "Yet have I seen it not."

"Oh, come," cried Cherwell impatiently, "we but fence about this matter. 'Tis my business to see Mr. Goodenough and whomsoever he desires for company. He will have a memory for one that was with my lord Shaftesbury."

"Why," says Shepherd, "there was a Mr. Goodenough of the city here that was used to attend here once, but it is odds if I see him again."

"I will trust to luck and your quick eyes," said Cherwell dryly, and there left the matter.

This Goodenough, as you will recall, was foremost in

the plot, and showed a real zeal in pushing the Duke's exclusion. But he had fled at the time of the discovery, and was now in hiding. Him Cherwell would approach, believing that he was earnest and might prove of use to him. Nor was he mistook in supposing that Shepherd would carry his message to Goodenough, and that the latter would trust in him. For word was privately brought to him within a week of a place where he might see the man, and my lord kept an appointment with him there. Goodenough was much frightened, but was as fanatical as ever, and fell into my lord's plans. These were to engage other gentlemen in a fresh plot against the Duke, and to fire the town with such examples. My lord was all for openness, and would not hear of that "lopping" of which they had spoken so foolishly at Shepherd's.

"Bring me these men ye speak of," he says, "and I will vow to execute this plan. But I will have no trespasses upon my honour, which is fixed. And this I tell you, Mr. Goodenough, that I shall be the leader of this rebellion—for rebellion it will be—and what I say shall be carried out so, as I say it."

Goodenough, and afterwards the others, made some demur at this, but in the end they accepted what he offered; for indeed they were glad enough to get a nobleman of this position to throw in his lot with their desperate venture, inasmuch as the whole case of rebellion was so deeply discredited, since the prosecutions of the Rye House plot. There were two or three gentlemen of birth whom Goodenough found, and there was also Trenchard, who came of the West country, and was sent presently to Taunton—these with a remainder of a

strange rabble, partly fanatic but in the main men of sore need and evil reputation, were joined with my lord in his folly. But he cared nothing for these particulars; he was pursuing his course, and naught could turn him. Yet to others, and these his friends, what acts he was engaged in soon began to look like madness. This rabble was well-armed, and, consisting of desperate fellows, became a fear to peaceful citizens. And at first there was nothing crept out as to what they desired, or what their business was; for my lord held his tongue so far and went to Court, while the others were not anxious to spread abroad the new plot, of which in truth they understood but little. What was known among them was that the Duke was to be excluded, but some said they were for Monmouth, but others for the Prince of Orange. Cherwell himself kept his counsel, and used his small means in providing for these horrid retainers, furnishing them with money and apparel. Meanwhile he put a watch on his Highness, thinking that my lady would come to no harm so long as he was dogged. The Duke had stayed in London all this time. But presently several of the conspirators, being the more desperate and less prudent spirits, took to following my lord, for a bodyguard, and this fact raised much comment. He went still to Court, mingling politely in the gaieties and showing no different front. Yet that rabble accompanied him often and sate down in the streets outside to wait, and to gamble with one another, annoying the passers-by with their talk and actions. There was some wit in Whitehall who dubbed these the wolves of Clodius, and comparisons were pointed at my lord, resembling him to that infamous person. But nothing was found against

the fellows until soon they came to be more riotous, and to make a noise in the streets by night, the more so if they were drunken. My lord, being taken to task by one of his friends, on this folly, answered very calmly that they were instruments.

"I care not what their conduct be," he said. "They shall serve my purpose, and shall not be turned against me. If you have a delicate stomach there is the other side of the way."

This reply was not of a character to conciliate his friends, and an estrangement grew up. Nevertheless, he was all this time extending his plot, and I have heard of several in high places who were favourable to him, though none dared to show him countenance openly. It was the King himself at last who spoke with him, warning him that he was suspected.

"Of what am I suspected, Sire?" asked my lord. "Is it of a design against your Majesty?"

"No," says the King. "You and I are the only persons that would suspect you of that, my lord. But you are suspected of what you are guilty."

"What is that?" said he.

"Why," says Charles, "I find my doorsteps sprinkled with some fellows that game and look black."

"They only toss for crowns, Sire," says my lord quietly.

The King bit his lip, and then smiled. "They were better to wait until I am dead, then," he said. "My lord, I have given you a warning."

The warning was of no avail, and my lord, so far from restraining his followers, took a more reckless course, and one which was amazing to all. He now

discovered himself and his purpose, repeating his opinions on every hand ; by which the body of his gang perceived whither they were bound. For he had seen enough of the Duke of Monmouth to have no faith in him, and he judged him to be what he afterwards proved. While from being at the Hague he had acquired a notion of the Prince of Orange's character, which he deemed suitable to sustain so great a trust ; and he made no scruple about saying this.

“We will have no Papist to rule over us ; we will not bring ourselves under the yoke of Rome,” was what he said ; and in plainer terms—“The Duke must be content to keep his post upon the high seas. He shall never sit in St. James’.”

These words being communicated from one to another came next to the King, and no doubt to the Duke himself. Yet no act was taken against my lord, only he was urged by some that wished him well not to intermeddle in those affairs, but to refrain his tongue, whatsoever he thought. My lord paid no heed, and now proceeded even to a greater extremity. He passed across London Bridge with a gathering of violent men, and setting up a yoke in Southwark, in the very middle of the market, bade all that came to walk under, for this, he said, was the yoke of Rome, which the Duke would bring them under presently. There was a great concourse of people in Southwark, whither a confluence of travellers traded from many ports ; and some of these, taking the whim, did as he ordered.

“Swear,” says he to them, “that ye will obey hocus pocus and honour the Pope above Almighty God. For if ye do not so, ye shall be cast into everlasting fires, and



burn, as is your due." And when they laughed and refused him, believing it to be a silly jest, he cried out, most fanatical—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, that I am the keeper of Hell and Heaven? Yea, so, I have the soul of his Highness in my hands, for I am vicar of God; and what I say that shall his Highness do, even though it should be to tear your bodies in pieces. His fathers," he cried out, "have whipped you with rods; but he shall whip you with scorpions."

Upon that the people ceased from laughing, and began to whisper together, and an Anabaptist who was in Cherwell's train stepped forth, and, with his eyes rolling, delivered him of a denunciation, calling on the Lord to destroy Antichrist, and to preserve the land from contagion and ruin.

Whereupon one among the bystanders, who had greater boldness than his fellows, called out to know how they should be saved.

"The Prince of Orange," cried Cherwell solemnly. "God hath bitter need of him this hour. He shall break down these bonds," and so saying he overturned the yoke and threw it into a bonfire which had been kindled in the street.

This scene drove many to suppose that he was mad, and the Prince of Orange himself, to whose ears it came, was greatly angered. Yet Charles took no steps against the culprit, being very reluctant, and maybe considering in his heart that my lord had been evilly used by the Duke. So that many, seeing how he was tolerated, and that such opinions might prove inoffensive, showed some favour to them, and there was much idle talk, very frankly passed about the Town. In truth, if the Duke

had pressed for the arrest of my lord, the King must have given way, for the thing had become a scandal. He, however, was fearful of provoking further outcry, for his connection with the outrage on my lady Cherwell was now public rumour. It is possible that he might have been shaken in his resolve to possess her, and the whole affair might thus have come to an end (for that he was alarmed I knew from one that was in his counsels) but for something that happened next, and gave another turn to this history.

My lord had the effrontery to make an appearance at Court soon after this incident—which was the very last occasion save one other in which he set foot in Whitehall. There he met cold looks and averted faces, and stalked through the rooms unaddressed. Nor would the King see him or notice his presence. Thus he was wandering through a gallery on his way forth when he heard some one call his name, and, turning, beheld the Lady Katharine Roodhouse.

“My lord,” said she, “what is my fault that I am so scorned? You walk like that spirit that Mr. John Milton wrote of.”

“And how walked he?” asked Cherwell smiling; wherewith she quoted in her soft and mincing voice some words of one who was the Protector’s secretary—

“The strongest and the fiercest spirit  
That fought in Heaven, now fiercer by despair.  
His trust was with the Eternal to be deem’d  
Equal in strength, and rather than be less  
Cared not to be at all.”

“Madam,” says he, “an I be so fallen why do you

pursue me with your friendly voice? There is none here that will do so."

"Why, my lord," she answered, "I am not bound by their constraint. I pick my own way. But if you be fallen, ye shall yet ascend again."

"I shall go deeper still," said he, eyeing her.

"Fie!" she said, enlarging her eyes. "There should be no despair in the Earl of Cherwell."

"Nay," said he quickly. "It is my pride. I am come to fulfil the destiny of my race."

"What is that?" she asked, wondering.

"It is to blast the career of tyrants," he said with heat. "It is to pull a wreck about them."

"And what good will that be to you, my lord?" she asked, laughing. "I have heard such tales, but it is my choice rather to be merry and to enjoy God's gift, this life and body of mine."

He looked on her admiringly. "Aye, that is your lot," he said; for there was great attraction in her face always.

"'Tis not mine alone," she said with a little laugh. "There needs more to my joy. I am not one to be merry in a wilderness."

My lord was silent, for he could not doubt her meaning, knowing what a careless name she had. Then he said brusquely—

"It is true you cannot stand alone, madam. You have looked high, which should give me cause to avoid ye."

"What!" she cried with impatience, "you speak of what ye know nothing."

"I know," says he bluntly, "that I went on a pursuit which your ladyship foiled."

"Faugh!" she cried. "Have I not told you that I am independent? I rest on no one. And what ye sought there ye had no right on."

"Nay," he says, "but now I have."

She inquired of him earnestly with her great eyes. "What right have you?" says she quickly.

"That of one who has a wife," he answered.

"A wife!" she said, laughing and lifting her brows. "But I asked not that, my lord. There are many wives. Sure I am one myself. In what relation stands your wife?"

"She is one that the fifth Earl of Cherwell shall call mother," says he calmly.

"Lard!" she cried merrily, "I trust she will like the honour. 'Tis one I grudge her not. Pshaw! I cannot smell to that name without aversion. It hath a common sound. But she is another. Let her bear what she will, poor fool; but how stand you to her, my lord?" and she trained upon him her soft glances.

"'Tis I that shall be father to her child," says he obdurately.

She laughed her sweet laughter. "Oh Lord, my lord," says she, shaking all over her open bodice. "But ye must not make too sure of that. You are no country squire to suppose the best."

"I dare only to suppose what is best of you, madam," says he, smiling on her.

She tapped him with her fan. "My lord, I perceive you are near salvation," she said pleasantly. "You should have a place in Madame de Rambouillet's Court—I vow you should." She turned away, and speaking over her shoulder, "But I am your friend," she said.

“Yea, believe that,” and so vanished in her idle graceful manner.

Now what ensued upon that by a strange accident I am able to set out in particular, having the information from Ravel, who was with the rogues. It seems that two of Cherwell’s creatures, the one an Anabaptist, by name Tonge, and a rascal called Dancock, who had been in the German wars, had been set to watch his Highness. About a quarter to eleven that same night they were posted outside the Duke’s house, observing his windows, and very cold and comfortless, for the weather was frosty. Presently some one came to the door, and letting himself forth passed into the street, wrapped in a cloak which veiled him. Dancock swore that this must be the Duke, in which Tonge agreeing, they both ran after him, keeping at a distance, yet holding him in sight. In this fashion they proceeded some long way, till they were come to a part which neither of these fellows recognized, owing partly to the darkness. The man they followed paused now and looked about him, and then, not perceiving them, who had hidden in the shadow, entered a house. The tale of what my lord had lost at the hands of the Duke was known to his attendants, and they thought that now they had his Highness at a disadvantage. While Tonge kept watch on the house, Dancock made off and presently returned with others of the party who had been drinking deeply. This pretty flock surrounded the house, and that not proving to their liking, rapped on the door, and one or two climbed over the walls into the garden. This knocking disturbed the people in the house, and a servant, looking out, discovered the rascals. Whereupon he flew in alarm to his mistress, who was no other

than the Lady Katharine Roodhouse ; for the house was hers. She was greatly disturbed from her usual stillness, and more especially as she had something to conceal.

“Who are they ?” she asked, and was told that they were a band of cutpurses and cracksmen at the least. But she thrust her head out of a window, and, perceiving one of them under the light, recognized him as a fellow she had seen before Whitehall. This was how she knew whence they came, which made her indignant. She called to her a page-boy who had some spirit and sent him off through a window, first to rouse the watch, and then to bring my lord Cherwell to shepherd his wolves. In the meantime the men below called out for some ale, and shouted that none should come forth except into their arms, be he Prince, they said, or canter. Lady Katharine, thereupon, was very deeply alarmed, and cried out to her servants that she was ruined. Now comes along the watch and made an effort to disperse the rogues, who refused and drew their weapons. Thereupon a fight took place, and some wounds were given, until one of Cherwell’s gang, breaking down the door, entered the house and ran up the stairway in a drunken fashion, followed by some of his companions and members of the watch. There was now a brisk engagement on the stairs, and one of the watch was struck through the heart and fell—whereat an outcry arose, and it was at this point that my lord appeared on the scene. He had been roused with the news that Lady Katharine Roodhouse was attacked, and he had hastened forth on the instant.

He came in through the broken door with a light swift step, and leaped up the stairs. There stood the Lady Katharine, who had been fetched out by the

increased noise when the man was slain, and, her spirit suddenly quavering, she was shrunk against the balustrade, holding to it tightly with her hand. My lord pushed through the crowd of struggling men.

“What is this?” he cries out. “Cease, cease!”

But no one paid any heed, and one of his own creatures, sword in hand, stretched out an arm to gather the lady to him. My lord put up his pistol and discharged it into his face, so that he reeled and went down without a groan. At the noise the others seemed to pause, and saw him for the first time with his smoking piece.

“Get ye back, ye scum!” said he fiercely, and they withdrew a step, staring at the body of their associate. Then he turned to Lady Katharine.

“Madam,” he said, “I ask your pardon in that through inadvertence I have been the author of this trouble.”

But she, tall and stately as she was, holding to the oak, set up a little whimpering as a child or a dog that is in fear.

“Come,” says he, “let me conduct you. There shall be no more pother here.”

He took her hand, and she made a movement to him, but set her foot unwittingly upon a body on the stairs, and with a great cry of terror stumbled and fell into my lord’s arms, clasping him closely about the neck, and laying her face and bosom upon him, weeping.

My lord carried her from the concourse into a room near by, and patted her hand while she sobbed.

“There,” says he, consoling her, “these dogs shall not harry you. I will drive them to their kennels.”

But here some one whispered in his ear that the Duke

was here, and that they had pursued him; whereupon he changed his demeanour, though he spoke still very courteously.

“My lady,” he said, “you will pardon this alarm, which was raised for your interest, in truth.”

“Interest!” she exclaimed. “God’s wounds, I shall die of this vulgar contact.”

“You do not know, I perceive,” he answered smoothly. “Poor creature, there is a notorious villain has been traced into this house, and vanished. No doubt he lies in wait to kill you or to debauch you.”

“Ah!” says she, staying her tears, “you are cruel, my lord.”

“Nay, nay,” he said in a soothing, coaxing voice. “My fellows would protect you. You shall come to no harm by this ruffian, and so I swear.”

She threw off his arm and fronted him. “I pray you cease, my lord,” she cried in a shaken voice. “I will not bear this at your hands. Heavens, I shall die of this shame you put upon me.”

“What!” he said, “when I would save you and guard you as my honour! I will go search for this villain at once.”

She set her back to the door. “You shall not,” she panted. “Oh, how I hate you, my lord.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “I begin to understand that there is something more in this,” he said in a dry tone.

She broke out into tears, for she was strangely shaken. “I care not for your thoughts,” she said. “Said I not I was your friend? Ye are a hard master, my lord, a bitter hard master.”



“I am no master to you, mistress,” said he lightly, and went out into the hall.

“He that ye saw enter here,” he said to his men, “was but a poor footboy, who being frightened has gone to bed,” and turning to the watch he said, “These brave fellows were grievously mistook. Get ye gone to your homes,” and scattered a shower of guineas among them.

After which he strode out of the house and was gone, while the others took up the two dead men and carried them away.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A NARRATIVE OF THE BLOODY CONTENTION AT BURFORD BRIDGE

THIS outrage was considered abominable even by my lord's friends, who took occasion to press again his departure and the abandonment of his enterprise. They argued that whatever blame might be imputed to James, my lord would gain nothing by his conduct, which was unreasonable and against policy. My lord gave them no heed, as ever, and they were driven to stand off and watch, as anxious spectators of a drama. Upon all hands he was avoided, even by Jermyn, who had once been his friend. He was now considered mad, and there was talk of an indictment. — But it could not be proved that he had set his men to that attack, and on the contrary there was evidence that he had stayed them with violence. So the Duke bided his time, which he deemed must be drawing very near. He was thrown into a heat of anger by his adversary's conduct, yet feared to stir in public against him.

“There is no peace,” he is reported to have said before his gentlemen; “there is no peace nor honour for me while this man lives,” and he stalked up and down

the room with agitation. "He is sworn against me," he cried. "He will turn my days into a burden. I know neither peace nor honour while he lives," and he uttered some exclamation which was not repeated, but which was afterwards declared to be the origin of what followed.

Now there was in the Duke's household a gentleman of some family, by name Cotes, handsome in a rude way, reckless, and very deeply devoted to his Highness's person. This man, hearing what fell from his master, goes straightway to some other gentlemen, as unscrupulous as himself, and asked them if they were ready to undertake a venture in his Highness's interests. They answered that they were; and he laid his plans before them, saying they had a good example before them in those that rid Henry II of a traitorous bishop. There were four of them in all, Pratt and Harrington by name, and one Hobday, who had once been attached to his Highness, but having fallen into disrepute thought now to rehabilitate himself. This last was greedy of vice; foul living had engendered in his body all the plagues of Egypt, along with fears and a suspicion of the night. These four rode together to Burford Bridge, whither Lord Cherwell had departed on the previous day upon some business.

My lord was in an upper chamber, where he stood with his back to the fire warming himself, and the supper had been served in an ante-room. Leaving the others without the door Cotes entered to him and came up the long room, giving him a salutation. My lord stood staring at him, as in wonder what any one should be doing trespassing there upon his privacy. But he said

nothing, nor did he answer Cotes's bow, only looked at him without any expression save that of inquiry. Cotes was not the one to be easily abashed, but this silence and indifference took him aback; he had expected to be challenged on his errand. So he himself was driven to speak first, which he did, coming to a pause within a sword-thrust of my lord Cherwell.

"My lord, maybe you recognize me, who I am?" says he.

My lord stared at him. "Not the least in the world," says he.

"Well," says he, "my name is Cotes, and I am a gentleman of good Cumberland blood."

My lord nodded. "I am pleased to hear it," he said; "for being so, Mr. Cotes, you will need not my reminder of what is owing from one gentleman that intrudes upon another."

"You desire me to go?" cries Cotes, flushing red; "well, I will not quarrel with you yet. I have some facts which may affect your lordship."

"If you are come on business, say on," says my lord equably, and as though this were some chandler.

Cotes glanced about the room. "We are alone?" he said.

My lord waved his hand. "You may speak on," he said. "I have no secrets from my landlord."

At this piece of arrogance Cotes reddened again, and began in an anger which he had not wished.

"I am of his Highness's household, my lord," said he abruptly.

My lord surveyed him from toe to heel, and "His Highness is to be congratulated," says he.

"'Tis better we were to come to business, my lord," said Cotes angrily. "I have a mission to you, and here it is. I have no quarrel with your lordship, whose name was once set very high in my esteem. But we stand upon different and opposite sides. To be frank, you are an impediment upon his Highness. I will not question into the cause. The origins and sources of this feud touch me not at all. The feud is all that I regard, and what his Highness has at heart is my affair."

"His Highness has a faithful servant," says Cherwell, bowing. "But whither does this lead? I can make no shape at all in it."

"Softly, my lord," said Cotes, "we are very close upon it. The secret lies just here—that this world may not contain his Highness and yourself. Follows then, that one must go, and that is not his Highness. You see, my lord, how honestly I speak with you."

"Ye may be honest, Mr. Cotes," says Cherwell, "but damme if you are plain. What would you have me to do for you?"

"Why," says Cotes, losing all his ceremony in his impatience that my lord did not perceive, and blurting forth his words, "why, I would have you dead."

My lord sate down at the table. "Oh," says he, looking on him curiously, "you wish me dead?" and then smiling a little, "I take it that this means a challenge, Mr. Cotes," he says, "and that you will take on yourself the office of butcher."

Cotes bowed with a sort of swagger, not at all ill-pleased with himself.

"You are very good so to honour me," said my lord, rising, "and I can congratulate the Duke upon a staunch

adherent, but,"—— He paused, and then with a glance at Cotes's expectant face, turned on his heel. "You may go to the devil."

This insult was not what Cotes had anticipated, and he broke out loudly—"By God, you shall fight with me, my lord."

"Come, come," says Cherwell impatiently. "I am tired of this silly business. I have no time for nonsense, and no stomach either. Mr. Cotes, I am busy—and yonder is the door."

"Ye shall be busier directly," sneered Cotes, now thoroughly enraged, "for I tell ye what I have promised shall be true."

Cherwell eyed him sharply. "Did your master send you?" he asked sternly.

"Indeed," says Cotes, recovering himself somewhat, and grinning, "he hath a better part to play. He is all for dalliance. 'Tis the husband falls to our lot, my lord," and he flung a glove in Cherwell's face.

My lord's eyes danced, and he drew his rapier. "Defend; God damn ye!" he said, and they fell to.

The noise at once brought in the others who were in waiting, as was arranged, and the door was shut in the innkeeper's face. Cotes was a good swordsman, and used some foreign tricks, but he was no match for my lord, though he had deemed he was. Yet the fight went forward with changing fortunes, and each was pricked twice ere it came to a final issue. Then my lord pulled back his lithe body, and quickly stretched himself forth, so that the blade ran through Cotes's right side, and he fell, bleeding freely. Whereupon my lord drew himself

up, and breathing hard looked on his enemy, who was gone white like a dead man.

“Take this poor fool away,” says he, perceiving the others, “and have him seen by a chirurgeon.”

Pratt, however, tapped him on the shoulder, and lifting his eyes from Cotes, my lord gazed on this new fellow. He was the second of the number, for they had cast lots for the succession.

“My lord,” says Pratt bluffly, for he was a coarse fellow, “pray direct your mind hither ; for you have still the fourth of an adversary left ye,” and he laughed, taking no heed at all of Cotes’s groans. At the same time one of the others moved to the door and locked it, throwing the key to the floor.

My lord dropped his point, all red and wet, and looked about him with a start. Then a knowledge of what they intended broke on him, and he drew a deeper breath.

“This is murder ye mean, then, gentlemen,” he said slowly. “It is murder ye mean.”

“Nay,” says Pratt shortly, “’tis justice only, my lord. Put up your point, or by God I will run you through your vitals.”

Cherwell’s face hardened, and then a smile, such as was constant with him, and partook not of amusement, passed to his face.

“Come then, Mr. Hangman,” said he lightly, and struck at him.

This man was both furious and determined, and he had no scruples, pressing upon my lord and driving him back by his weight alone ; for he was of huge stature. But my lord stood plying on his legs, his supple body bending and

swaying, drawing short breaths. Pratt fought with an obstinate purpose, and by his very urgency pushed back his opponent till my lord was against the wall. But he could make no way against that skilled resistance. Again and again his point spluttered upon the wall, until, growing angry and therefore the more impetuous, he threw his whole force into a stroke at my lord's heart. It was set aside gently, and the blade cracked upon the woodwork. The next moment my lord passed his sword through him and came out into the middle of the room, stepping over the body and shooting his glittering eyes at the remainder of that wicked gang. Says my lord—

“Have ye done? or who comes next exacting or justice?” and at that, thinking he had an easy prey, one of the two that were left, Harrington, met and engaged him.

“I will send you to hell,” cried my lord, panting. “Ye shall go to your master—the devil.”

But indeed he was sorely tried, what with his wounds and his weariness, and Harrington had him at a disadvantage. Ere a dozen passes were over he slipped and fell, his face in the blood that ran on the floor. With a cry Harrington leaped upon him, and raised his weapon. Then must my lord have realized sharply that it was of a truth his death they wanted. This man's blood was hot, yet it was not the incitement of the duello that carried him to this passion. These shameless men had planned this end deliberately, and though two had fallen it seemed that my lord was yet to die at the hands of the third. Harrington drew back his rapier and plunged the steel forward and downward—but my lord was lithe and vigilant, and he flung himself away, rolling a little. The



point took him in the ribs, grazing and tearing upon the bone, which nevertheless protected him. The man pulled back and thrust again, with an angry exclamation, and again my lord gathered himself together and shot as by a spring a foot away. This second miss so enraged the fellow, that he dropped to his knees, bending close over Cherwell, so that his eyes, gleaming with savage and devilish hate, were looking into my lord's. He drew a short dagger and leaned nearer, with his hand over my lord's heart. Yet it was this very haste to make sure that cost him the victory; for no sooner was he set there, fingering at my lord's breast, than he was seized with a bloody wrist, and his hand which held the knife was bent back. He cried out in his anguish, for he had not thought that such strength should dwell in one of such a delicate proportion, whom he deemed to be already far spent; and upon that there was a little splutter of crackling bones and ligaments, and he called out to his fellow that remained—

“Stab him! Stab him, damn ye!”

But, as it chanced, this last, who was Hobday, and much shaken by his excesses, knew not what to do in his agitation. For the excitement of the fighting had now passed into the horror of that deadly struggle there, outside the code of honour, between the two men, the murderer and his victim; and the one of these that was intended for the victim rose now upon his elbow slowly, showing a cruel face, smeared with dust and guttering blood, while the other dropped back and slid reluctant over, screaming and cursing foul oaths, and calling for help. The next thing that this Hobday saw was my lord risen up, his sword in hand.

“Rat! rat!” he cried, and thrust it into what lay there, with such force that the blade snapped and broke.

Then he turned about, and his breathing could be heard across the room.

“What!” says he stuttering, “have I not finished with ye, bloody rogues? Then there is one more for hell,” and he ran at Hobday with his broken blade.

Now this, with the sight of that ensanguined chamber, under the candle-light, was more than Hobday could endure. He sped to the door, flying from that madman; but 'twas locked by his own fellows. Back rushes he to the other side of the table toward the chimney-piece, and my lord upon him with that shivered sword, the blunt and jagged butt still dropping blood. Hobday was now possessed of a terror, and he ran between these courses, screaming like a fowl that knows not which way to fly. He was struck once, and redoubled his cries, so that all the house was in alarm and some ran and hid in the cellars; but at length, my lord being weary of foot and weakened of his wounds, the man took an opportunity, and with a sudden thought, hurled himself at the shut window, through which he fell, scattering the glass wide, and so came in a twisted, bleeding lump to the ground without. At that Cherwell must have ceased, and presently the door opened of that chamber and he came out, calling to the innkeeper quietly. His face was changed, but the red was still upon it.

“Landlord,” says he, “there has been some mischief in the upper room, and some lie there that need help. It were best for your sake to have them tended.”

The innkeeper was greatly terrified, for he knew not what had happened, and he stammered out—

“My lord, are they dead?”

“I know not,” says he. “I have given them what I could, and that which was owed. Fetch me my horse.”

He was upon the road to London ere half-an-hour was past, for all that he was so desperately weak and that the hour was so late. It was eleven o'clock of a late December night, and the ground was white with frost as if it had been snow. My lord rode from Burford Bridge in his soiled and tattered clothes, and when he had reached Mickleham a white fog rose up and swarmed across the hills and valleys. The trees stood out like dead things upon either side, and he still rode forward through the white wilderness. He drew rein but the once that he knew of, and that was near Epsom, when he called the drawer from a wayside tavern to bring him French brandy. As he was drinking this astride his reeking horse, he spied a man steal forth of the house and mount quickly. Then he saw that this was Hobday, and throwing down the glass ere it was empty he cried out like one that is following on a pack of hounds, and dug the rowels into his poor nag. Hobday made off in a lively terror, beating and thrashing his stout horse until the mists swallowed him up from Cherwell, who sate in his saddle and laughed aloud, with weakness and the spirit. The fog clung darker about the woods of Ashstead and he could see nothing. He followed in trust whither his beast should lead him. The air grew colder, and some bells were chiming one o'clock far in the distance, sailing to him on the still night. The horse slipped and slithered, and was spent; and then my lord must have sank away in sleep or faintness.

When he awoke the beast was still ambling, and he

was still set for London, but he knew not whither he had gotten. Yet the fog had grown thinner now, and the moon was come up in heaven to spy upon him. It was the night before Yule, and indeed by this hour 'twas Christmas-tide; and lights were yet twinkling in the windows of the cottages. Says Cherwell afterwards, that he never looked upon so white a moon that hung upon so white a world; the dark earth itself and all those naked branches sparkled with a shining light. He was grown very sore and stiff, and chill to the marrow, but he judged he could not be far from Town, and so he continued upon his way, singing to himself, and cheering of his horse, poor wretch. Presently after he came up to a house, and rapping on the door, brought out a goodman, who told him he was nigh Sutton. And thus encouraged, he drank more brandy, and so proceeded on his way.

## CHAPTER XV

### OF MY LORD'S INCREASING MADNESS, AND OF HIS ESCAPE FROM THE TOWER

MY lord descended upon London, spreading abroad a waft of death. None knew what had drawn him back in so great a haste, for of what happened at Burford Bridge he had said no word. Yet it was plain that he had returned with a strong determination, and that the time was ready for action. He went about privily among such as were well affected to him, and was urging forward a plot. Letters passed to Holland, and the Duke of Monmouth was brought in. Meanwhile something of that frustrated assassination leaked out by way of Hobday, who was driven to speak, partly out of a natural love of gossip, and partly to defend himself. He gave quite another account of himself, but the remaining facts were related truly; and the story was set in motion and grew monstrous big in rolling, which drew the eyes of men more than ever to my lord Cherwell. Whosoever was responsible for that wicked purpose came nearer to winning my lord open sympathy than anything before. He had at this time the admiration of the vulgar; it moved in a body to him; and none was so popular in the streets where

his rufflers still might be seen. Yet my lord was incredibly rash and greatly daring. Though he held himself so quiet, he was like a madman in his mind, controlling his deeds with difficulty, and ready to break out on any chance. Whereas he had formerly used some low fellow or rascal to watch his Highness's actions, he now often took the task upon himself, and was to be seen following of the Duke about the streets with the most ostentatious indifference. And this led to the next episode in this remarkable and private war.

My lord had appointed to meet one from the Hague, who brought messages, and one evening was awaiting this arrival in his inn, which abutted on the Fleet waters. The window commanded a broad scene, where the wenches went up and down crying their wares, and there was much chaffering. As he spied through the window, he caught sight of a figure which was familiar, and that set him on his feet staring sharply; for the man had the lean and shambling gait of the cut-throat, Fargus. The news was too attractive for my lord, who, calling on Ravel, ran out of the house and pursued the villain. There was no need to hasten, for the fellow could not escape, and Cherwell did not desire to brawl in the streets, so he followed quietly, giving no sign. The man went towards Whitehall, with my lord after him, and walked straight for the Duke's house, into which he disappeared. This suddenly brought my lord to a stop, considering what he should do, and if he should denounce the rascal in the Duke's presence, so as to shame his Highness. He had several plans in his head, which he was pondering, when suddenly the door opened and the Duke himself came out, accompanied by a gentleman.

My lord forget his errand in respect of Fergus, and at once rushed to watch his Highness, secluding himself under the shadows of the garden. Then the Duke set out on foot with his attendant, moving towards the city precincts, and my lord followed. There was so evident a furtiveness in his Highness's actions that my lord suspected. He thought that Fergus must have brought intelligence, and that the Duke had gone forth clandestinely to visit my lady Cherwell, where she was hid. This redoubled his fury, and he swore an oath to track down so wanton a debaucher. As he came through the narrow alleys backward of the river he was joined by Ravel and several more of his men, who, seeing he was stalking a quarry, became hot and violent. My lord damned them for a noisy pack, and then was quickly fetched about by the disappearance of the Duke through a wall.

"What is this?" he says, and runs forward. "I make no doubt here is the spot," and he hammered upon the wicket gate. There was no reply to this demonstration, and the others coming about him, began to examine if they might break through; and presently the lock was burst, and they all passed in.

"I will have no sound until I give the signal," said Cherwell in his peremptory manner. "This is in my hands, and I alone shall deal justice, as it is to be dealt. Yet stand ye by and watch."

The wicket gate opened into a short tunnel of stone which conducted into a small square chamber of thick masonry, smelling of a dungeon.

"Is her ladyship prisoned here?" says one fellow.

"Silence!" cried Cherwell angrily, and pushed through

a further door swiftly. Here the place was still in great darkness, but there was a green arras hung before him, and beyond that a light was shining dimly. Also a sound of some music reached his ears, and he stood then perplexed, wondering what this might be, and if perchance again he had broke into a chamber that belonged to my lady Katharine Roodhouse. He walked a little further, and perceived that the arras descended for a cover over oaken rails, and at last he plucked it impatiently aside, and looked through, and suddenly discovered where he was and what was in course before him.

The room was in twilight, yet at the further end he could perceive an altar set with Papistical objects, and a thin priest bowing in his vestments over the Host. And James, Duke of York, with other three knelt there, worshipping. My lord was still a moment, and then, pricked on by his reckless nature, he strode through the arras into the chapel.

“*Hoc est corpus*——” began the priest, and my lord, his spurred heels ringing on the stone floor, so that one of the gentlemen with his Highness started up, interposed on this with a loud voice.

“What have we here?” he called out; “my faith, but is this part of that great and noble kingdom of England? Sure she is not wont to ignore them that disobey her laws. This is rank papistry, sirs. Ye are nought but condemned recusants.” He feigned not to observe his Highness, who rose at once to his feet and stood, frowning, angry of face, not knowing what to do. The sound of my lord’s voice brought out his companions—a rude and sorry gang, all armed, glistening with steel and waiting his commands.

“Who are ye, then?” says Cherwell, striding nearer to



the altar ; " who are ye that dare set at nought the laws of this realm ordained by God, his Majesty and the people ? I warn you this, you wretches, I will have you burn in the hand for this, or stand carrots in the pillory."

But some of his myrmidons, thinking he did not recognize the Duke, stole up and whispered in my lord's ear.

"Go to," says he, throwing him off in a passion of anger, "I will not suffer this great nation to be so brow-beat by a parcel of priests and their creatures. Stand aback there!" he calls to the gentleman by the altar, and drawing out his sword he went forward. One of them took him by the arm.

"Fore God, my lord," said he in a low voice, "have a care. Know you not who stands here?"

"Why," says Cherwell, with a short laugh, "is't the Almighty God, or is it some other of that Holy Three, that ye speak so with bated breath and tremble? I know no other to make me so draw the breath. What! would you kneel and gape then at this piece of bread? Is't there you fear your God? Swounds, you craven mice, that steal and wriggle into holes to fulfil your heathenish practices, the law shall have the handling of you, I swear to God it shall."

The priest, keeping his wits still, came forward close to him. "Sir," said he in a low voice, "I would ask you to pause. You are mad; you know not what you are doing, nor what wrath you are calling upon yourself."

"Stand back, old man," said my lord, his fury burning his vitals at the sight of that one who was his enemy; and he thrust the priest aside, addressing himself to the others. "This desecration hath gone forward too long. This country is weary of your machinations and your

superstitions. The time is come to put an end to it."

Then fixing his gaze upon his Highness, who shrank in the shadows, hoping perhaps to escape notice, and fearing naturally to be included in a common brawl, "And you, my lord Duke and Prince Highness," he said in a sharp low voice, "'tis a fine ensample that your Highness sets to his fellow-subjects. What do you here but to break the law, you that should uphold it?"

Seeing himself to be recognized, the Duke stepped forward, and with a gesture bade my lord be silent.

"I am answerable to none but one," said he sternly; "what do you, breaking into a private place, my lord? Beware lest this law you speak of shall not rather hold you in its talons."

"What, you would threaten me!" cried my lord, flaming forth into an anger that was nigh madness; "you are the last of those Stewarts, and by God so shall you be. Your Highness will be cast out; then shall ye wail and gnash your teeth in the darkness."

"Silence!" commanded the Duke, his eyes flashing.

"Who are you to put these orders to me?" demanded my lord hotly. "If there is one to whom you answer, I answer to none. I am keeper of myself, and I will walk where I list and none shall stay me."

"We shall see how you justify that boast, my lord," said his Highness.

Then quickly taken by a spirit that struck him, as a tree is shaken with a gust, my lord ran forward, crying, "This blasphemy shall cease out of the land. We will set a term to it. Get ye gone, your Highness, ere I drive these that defile the temple with cords from hence."

As he spoke he thrust the point of his sword into the bread that was the Host, and scattered the fragments into the air, while with his hand he tore the hangings from the altar.

One of the gentlemen with the Duke would have sprang forward and struggled with him to hinder him from this sacrilege, but his Highness stayed him with his arm. The priest, too, moved not, being wise to see that resistance was but to prolong the trouble. But there was a cry of horror from the others, and even my lord's followers looked to be awed, though one of the fanatics called out—

“Blessed be God !”

My lord threw down the rags he had torn with a gesture of contempt, and turned towards his Highness, who was silent, looking at him very coldly, but to all seeming was greatly affected. Then the Duke turned away as if he would withdraw, but the priest spoke at last.

“God shall smite you, you accursed man,” he said solemnly, “God shall deal you judgment.”

My lord put up his sword, and throwing back his head, laughed loudly.

“Ye have no persuasion with God, old man,” said he, and saying nothing more, suddenly strode down the chapel and walked out of the place, with his men behind him.

This last act, so desperate and lunatical, drove the Duke to retaliation. It appeared that the hostility had been pushed too far against him, and his gentlemen wondered to see him so patient. But he was ever a timid man, whose fears were nearly as big as his opinions. He

lacked that spirit, not to face and oppose dangers threatening the body, but to meet a tide swoln heavily against him. This indeed he demonstrated afterwards when his forces were worsted in Ireland, and he deserted those who fought for him. He had hesitated to strike at my lord openly, fearing what that mad man might do ; but his pitiful wavering could no longer last. For shame itself he was goaded to move. As my lord Cherwell was stepping into a coach three nights later, he was taken by two officers on a charge of high treason, and lodged in the Tower. It is said that he laughed a little when he learned their business, and leaped into his coach lightly.

“Come in, gentlemen,” says he ; “and if you will kindly direct the rascal to drive whither we are bound, ’twill save us all time and me trouble.” A little afterwards he asked about the charge, and added, “His Highness considers that he shuts my mouth so ! I have started that rolling which, though I be dead and in chains, shall not be stayed nor interrupted.”

It was supposed by some that the King would not have him touched ; but now that he had so far committed himself, the Duke was plainly resolved to be rid of him. The trial was hurried on, and chief among the accusations against him was that which he did and said in Southwark, for which many were evidence. Also he was charged with plotting the King’s death, and to put the Prince of Orange in his place. My lord lay in the Tower for three months and more, and the day was fixed for his appearance before the Court. He was visited by some who were advising him in his defence upon a Thursday afternoon, and with these he talked a long while. Afterwards there was a message brought

him. On the following morning he was fled, leaving no track behind him.

This escape of my lord's was deemed remarkable at the time, for none was remembered to have broken out of the Tower. Nor was it ever known how he did so. This is why I have set down with some little care the story of that flight, gathered from himself, and make it public for the first time. My lord was entertained very agreeably in his prison, and played upon the green in the mornings; yet the time went on and grew heavy in the going, until the preparations for his trial began to occupy him. No sooner were his counsel gone from him on the Thursday afternoon than he was told that a man waited with a message to deliver.

"I can have nothing more agreeable in this place than to have messages all day," said he, and asked for the man to be brought. This, it seems, was a servant to Lady Katharine Roodhouse, and fetched out a letter, which there is no doubt she had procured of the Duke should be delivered.

*"Said I not, my lord," it ran, "that I am a friend to you, and would fain see you served? Alas, I can no more than I have done with his Highness. Yet this I believe, that were your lordship at liberty, and would abandon what you have so rashly taken up, there would be nothing brought against you. His Highness is sore, yet he would go no further, an he might stop. He hath a black fit on him. I am deeply in despair of you. But judge me not by my words alone. My lady Cherwell lies hidden where I have knowledge of her. So have I proved that tender friendship between us that you doubted. That you shall not deny me, my lord. I would I might*

*spirit away those black humours of thy prison and fetch thee forth. It is a little gentle dove that flies to carry thee so much of my tears and my sorrow. My heart is a turtle that hath lost her way and moans among the trees, lamenting of her homelessness. An she might light at thy prison window, my lord, it may be that she might be guided to her rest, as God willeth."*

My lord read this letter of that singular woman, and, dismissing the man, strode up and down his chamber. The news that my lady Cherwell was discovered sharply astonished him; she had faded in his mind recently through the great urgency of those other matters; but now the image of that revenge and that rectification allured him lightly. She was hid in a captivity like his own, but he could bring her no aid who was himself a prisoner. He walked about this stone chamber, consumed with this fresh desire, and presently he lay down upon his bed and was quiet.

A little after ten one of the guard of yeomen opened the door and came in bringing my lord his supper, which was a capon and some wine. My lord lay upon the bed still, with the coverings wrapped about him, and he shivered as with the cold.

"I am damnably chill, Robins," says he, "I have taken cold. The wind has struck at my stomach. Have ye a warmer wrapping? Faith, let me have something to keep the frost away."

Robins, who had a liking for him, as had they all, went forth into the passage, and locking the door, returned after a time with a blanket fetched out of a vacant room.

"'Tis good linsey-woolsey, my lord," said he, "and you are welcome." There was no sound in answer from

what lay on the bed, and Robins, supposing my lord to be asleep, threw the blanket on him.

“Rest ye sound,” he said, speaking as if to himself; “for if all be true ye shall rest no more to-morrow.”

This he said because of the day fixed for my lord’s appearance.

Yet what lay there was not my lord, as he supposed, but a feint of the bed-clothes, so humped as to look like the figure of a man in that small light. My lord was in the further corner of the room by the door, and ere Robins had finished his ministrations was past him, and out of the doorway stealthily. When he had descended the stone steps half-way he paused and listened to hear if Robins raised an alarm; but he heard the door closed and locked, and he knew that he was secure. He ran lightly down the staircase, therefore, and passing under a vaulted roof emerged upon the open night. He was bareheaded, and in his own habiliments, which would betray him instantly if he were seen. So, knowing the place thoroughly, he made his way across the courtyard to a long room where the warders set their heavy cloaks, and gossiped over the fire. In the ante-room to this he found what he wanted, and fitted over him the great cloak, while he clapped a yeoman’s hat on his head. No sooner was this done than there was a noise of talking, and it was plain that some of the guard were approaching. My lord snatched up a pike, being resolved now upon any defence, rather than be taken. Yet a thought flashing upon him with that rare quickness habitual to him, he turned from this design, and pulling the cloak about him close opened the door between this ante-room and the hall beyond. This was full of men-at-arms, who were

laughing together before the fire, yet my lord trusted rather to that careless assembly than to one or two who might spy him out by their particular attention. Besides, for a prisoner that was escaping to go through that crowded hall would be incredible. Thus he passed through with a strong gait, and strode down the chamber, paying no heed to any, but muffled to the eyes and none paying him any heed; and at the further end he issued once more into the darkness.

So far he had gone in safety, but the worst was yet to come. The walls and gates of the Castle were diligently watched and guarded by many sentinels; and yet he must break out ere the morning dawned and his flight was discovered. 'Twas that space of time that gave him prudence. He needed not to hurry, and he sate down privily to consider what he should do. His thoughts turned at once to the water-gate, that is known as the Traitor's Gate, from which it was used to carry the condemned to their doom. But a little exploration showed him that he could expect nothing here—the bars of that gateway were great, and so close that they would admit none. Outside the gate he could hear the mire sucking in the ditch, which led to the river. This was the only side of the Tower from which there was a chance of egress, and it now was manifest that if he could not escape through the bars, he must from the battlements. Presently he found a stair that led up, and, seeking his opportunity, when the watch passed, he crept up without noise till he came upon a sentinel. Here he made a horrid pause, wondering if he should throw this man instantly over the wall; but by good chance he perceived him to be silent, and stealing closer saw that he was



asleep. Still, like a mouse, he went along that top until he came to a point where the wall overlooked a ditch of water, and nigh unto the drawbridge. This, thinks he, is where he must attempt, and letting himself over, he hung by his fingers from the embrasure. On this moment there was a sound of feet, and a soldier came and stood above him gazing out across the river. My lord kept his grip of the stones, daring not to let fall, which would give warning of his escape. So he hung till the blood crept out of his hands and they grew numb, and each second he feared lest he should give way and drop. But after a time the man passed on, seeing nothing in that blackness, and scarce were his footsteps faded when my lord's fingers slipped, and down he fell with a great smack into the dirty waters of the ditch. Bubbles of mud and water were in his mouth when he rose, and struck forth under the drawbridge for the river. But now his strange activities burned in him, devouring his inwards, and thus he swam against the tide, breasting the savage current. He came out by St. Katharine's in half-an-hour, and then rested upon the margin dripping with wet and mire. Then he resumed his journey, this time upon the land; and so passing by quiet by-ways arrived at his tavern very late.

He that admitted him stared in amazement to see him, but he paid no heed, and went to his room, where he doffed his evil raiment and set on fresh clothes. He drank a glass of neat brandy and immediately set forth again, going out by the house with that man gaping after him; for he was resolute to see the Lady Katharine Roodhouse that night.

The hour was now after midnight, and a raw wind was

blowing ; yet it curbed not his sufficient ardours, and he reached the house at one of the clock. It stood all black, save for a single candle shining in a window on a higher storey. It was so, he thought, that he had visited this lady upon a former occasion in her house by Fulham. Not desiring that any should have knowledge of him but those who were necessary, he would not rap at the door, but climbing swiftly by the abutments reached presently the window which he sought. Once there, he tapped gently on the pane.

This brought to the window the mistress of the house, as he had thought, who looked out with her eyes wide open, staring into the windy night. Then at the sight of a man she fell away with a cry ; but my lord drummed again upon the window gently. And at that, though she could make out nothing of his face, it appears she took heart and opened the casement, when my lord stepped through and confronted her.

She made an exclamation of wonder and delight to recognize him.

“Oh, my lord,” says she, “what means this ? What has fetched you out of that confinement ?”

“’Twas your voice that called me forth,” said he, smiling on her, “there is no incarceration that can endure against your ladyship.”

“You speak fair,” said she, her face alight with contentment, “yet you do but jest with me. I wrote to cheer you, my lord, and that your spirits should harden.”

“And I am here,” said he, “in answer. I am come to thank you, madam.”

She stood before him, tall and delicately full, clothed in a cherry-coloured taffeta that fell from her white bare

bosom softly to the floor ; and with her challenging glances she invited him tenderly.

“ You are very good, my lord,” said she softly, “ I fear I am a foolish woman to be so generous of myself. I am too prodigal,” and she laughed low.

“ Nay,” returned my lord quickly, “ there is a gentle friendship between us, as you know. ’Twill cover what you blush for. There is no rebuke for such kindness as you show me.”

He perceived that she mistook what he had come for, and he knew not in what way to lead her. She turned a little aside and sat down, as if with an impatience.

“ ’Tis a late hour, my lord,” says she in an indifferent voice, “ you have honoured me unexpectedly, yet I must have a care for my name. What business have you ? ”

“ Madam,” says he, softly and relenting, “ there is one that ye recall to me, long dead.”

“ Who is that ? ” said she quickly, looking at him.

“ One I knew in Paris,” he answered her, “ and she spoke with that voice you speak. I close my eyes and hear her.”

She was silent a moment. “ And how many have you known, my lord—long dead ? ” said she slowly, with her eyes on the fire. “ Sure, they have passed away and left ye still lamenting. How many will you leave ? ”

“ Madam, I shall leave some maybe that think on me with pity,” said he, “ and many that shrug the shoulder, but maybe one also shall I leave that cries out for me and prays a little.”

Her face softened and sparkled. “ Aye,” said she, “ there will be one.” He was in the custody of her eyes for a space, and then she said, “ Why will you not give up this untoward quarrel, my lord ? It vexes you to the grave.”

"It shall harass me beyond the grave, madam, ere I may abandon it," said he firmly.

"What is it you have at stake?" she asked.

"I have put my honour on the toss of the dice," said he, "and with that my life."

She sighed. "You will lose both," she answered, "yet if you were content the Duke would forgive."

My lord smiled. "He would forgive!" he repeated. "Why, he is magnanimous; he would make a generous Prince."

"My lord, you are bitter," she said, and he answered nothing save to bow. "You would release my lady Cherwell?" she asked.

"I am broken out of my lodging for that," he answered.

"When will you end this contention?" she asked earnestly; "will the enlargement of her ladyship finish it?"

He hesitated. "I know not; I cannot foretell," he replied shortly.

"Ah!" she cried out in triumph, "'tis not for her that you fight them? 'Tis for something further."

"Madam," said he, speaking very coldly, "she shall bear me sons."

She bit her lip, a colour slipping to her face, and she considered him softly.

"Nay, but that is needful," she said next, "it is her task. Yet the whole of life lies not in that outlook. Is she beautiful?"

"She is called so," he answered. "She hath fine eyes. I think she hath due proportions to her body."

The lady Katharine's face lit again, and her gaze fell to her own just figure.

“If she be beautiful,” she said, “this is no news. It is not rare. My lord, she is not the only woman so called. My lord,” she pleaded softly, “is there no other that may claim that title?”

He met her enticing witchful eyes. “True, there is another,” said he gently. He had some excitement moving him, but he was very deliberate. “Madam so kind,” he said, “you have some news for me,” for he was still greedily devoured of his passion against the Duke.

“’Tis true,” said she, thinking. “I have some news. But why should I play catspaw in your service, my lord?”

“Ye play a very pleasant part of friend,” he said softly.

She took from her bosom a piece of parchment. “It has been conceived there and borne in pain for you, my lord,” she murmured. He put out a hand to take it. “Shall I give you that which will tell you where my lady is held?” she whispered.

“Give it to me,” says he eagerly.

Her breath came quicker, and the scent of her presence was in the room.

“Nay but, my lord, you will be long away,” she murmured.

“I will haste back,” said he.

“Nay rather, hasten not to go,” she pleaded.

He took back his hand and sate down, regarding her.

“I will stay,” said he softly, “to hear thee sing. I pray you pluck for me the lute, madam.”

“I will compel you with these strings,” she murmured, and laughed softly. “I will charm ye out of that most hard heart,” and taking up the instrument she set her delicate fingers to it.

## CHAPTER XVI

### AN ACCOUNT OF THE RISING AT TAUNTON ; WITH THE ASSAULT ON BARRS

MY lord took his departure for the West next morning very early, leaving word for such of his band as he desired, whither he was gone. 'Twas now high spring, and the fields were sparkling with daisies ; and in the woods the bracken was rising from the purple earth like a clenched hand. Ravel (poor soul) had haunted the precincts of his master's prison like a troubled spirit that may not rest, drinking and gaming and bragging in the purlieus, with any wench or ruffler. He was of a most abominable bad life, but had a tongue like a hound to lick his master's hand. Cherwell was scarce free of the Tower three hours ere Ravel smelled him out, learning what the innkeeper had seen, and how he was struck dumb with wonder. And so it was they rode together at dawn for Taunton. There was need for haste, for the news of that escape must be presently spread about, and my lord would be sought for. Yet by the hour that his flight was known, he and Ravel were many leagues upon the way, and nigh to Hampton Court. At the speed with which they travelled there was no chance to overtake

these riders, even if it had been known whither they went ; and thus my lord journeyed like a tempest through that blossoming country into Taunton.

Once in Taunton he sought Westmacott, with whom he had several times been in correspondence ; also Trenchard, that had come hither from Town recently on a mission. These were both amazed to see him, and declared that the blow was now to be struck, for that my lord had crossed the Rubicon. They reported also upon their doings, which pleased my lord very well. The whole of that district was disaffected, and would rise on the approach of any deliverer, said they ; and Westmacott offered to furnish one hundred armed horse.

“For ’tis you that must be the deliverer, my lord,” said he eagerly.

“Tut, tut,” says Cherwell, “we must have a name before us. I will do my work, but there must be some soft-fleshed ninny to take off my cap to—or maybe some long-nosed Dutchman.”

This he said, not knowing if he might not be forced to take up with Monmouth, through the coldness of that prudent Prince of Orange. Yet, although he was now resolute to carry through his plot, and by a rebellion of these western shires to wrest from the King an Exclusion Act, and the alteration of the succession, there was one thing before all which my lord had not forgot. He had with him a scrap of paper upon which some words were written, which were but two, that is to say, “Barrs” and “Somersetshire.” What he does first, then, after these exchanges is to ask of Westmacott what Barrs might be.

“Why,” says Westmacott, “’tis a house in the hills,

and none so far from Durcombe, my lord, where your lordship was."

"Whose house is it, say you?" asked Cherwell quickly.

"'Tis Sir Mordaunt Pringle's," says he, "a foppish young gentleman who is nothing considered."

"There shall be some reason to consider of him presently," says my lord with a laugh. "I remember him now. He hath no head, but moves like a puppet to the showman's strings. Yet puppets and showman alike shall vanish."

"What is this, my lord?" inquired the other.

"'Tis only that I must be making a journey to this same Barrs," says he. "Maybe this Pringle will join us. I may persuade him. I will tickle his feather head. I will turn him like a tee-to-tum," and he laughed softly.

There was no delay of this my lord's prime business, for he was riding for Barrs the next morning, without so much as a parting with his friends. By cross roads and by-ways he went in the hope of better speed, but arrived late at the house owing to his mistaken directions. He was amazed to see how huge a castle this was, spreading over a height, and commanding with its eyes the park and gardens. Yet indeed it was wrongly named, being called after an older fortalice, but itself a house, without plan or order, builded in the time of King Harry. The hour was by this time on dusk, and the fine winds of spring accompanied him on his way through the demesne, crying briskly in his ears and sharpening his senses. He came out in the falling twilight before the castle, and demanded admittance, asking for Sir Mordaunt. The man begged of him who he was, and says my lord—

"I am with a particular mission. 'Tis enough that



you shall say I am one having business with the Duke!"

This seemed to content the fellow, who returned soon, to conduct my lord to his master. Cherwell did note that the corridors, which parts remained of the ancient castle, were of great masonry, and very badly decomposed in parts, while the wind blew shrilling through some vacant windows. It was clear that the house had been builded with little design, and with no intent to resist an assault. My lord came forthwith into a room, warmly furnished and bright, where stood Sir Mordaunt Pringle, awaiting him in some eagerness. But no sooner had he set eyes on him than he fell back with a gasp, and began to look out of anxious eyes.

"What seek ye, my lord?" he stammered. "Why is't you grace my poor house thus?"

My lord bowed, smiling, and drew an arm-chair before the fire. "By your leave, Sir Mordaunt," said he, "I will make myself to be comfortable, the which I do the more readily, as Sir Mordaunt is known for his hospitality."

Pringle gave him back his bow, but said nothing, not well knowing what to say, and wondering what was to follow.

"Yes," says my lord, smiling on him, "'tis a generous heart and a free board you show, sir; and if report speaks true you entertain guests for long times, even for many months. The Lord deliver that poor guest that would fly Sir Mordaunt Pringle's hospitable attentions! He may not; he is constrained, the maw of fellowship eateth him up."

"I am honoured that you hold so kind an opinion of me, my lord," said Sir Mordaunt uneasily, "but I do not take you. You speak very strangely."

“What!” says my lord affably. “Do I do not speak plain? Pest, I am a poor messenger. But my wits go slowly, and are outrun by my intentions. I do purpose well; and presently, if ye bear with me, we shall, I vow, come to some conclusion.”

“My lord,” cried Pringle in a flutter of alarm and anger, “if so be you are come to make challenge of me, I know your design, and I warn you that you have chosen ill for yourself.”

“’Slife, Sir Mordaunt!” says my lord, opening his eyes, “what are ye at to speak so oddly? I am here to your advantage, and to save a very proper youth. I have seen many that begin thus and end i’ the gutter.”

“My lord!” cried the other, pink of the face, “what is your business with me?”

“Business!” says he. “Why now I think of it, you are young to be so engaged in such business. It matters not for older heads and ruder stomachs such as mine, but your delicate palate, your nice scruples—Damme, sir, but I think you lack taste.”

“You are drunken, my lord,” stuttered Pringle.

“Nay, not drunken,” says he, “but philosophic to observe the ruins of a poor youth. And yet I waste time, Sir Mordaunt. Let us get to business, as you very well say. You know why I am come?”

“I know nothing, my lord, save that you were best away,” says Pringle in a surly voice.

“There you are mistook,” answered my lord, shaking his head. “’Tis of prime necessity that I am here. D’ye think I would so disparage his Highness when I have agreed with him? We shall yet shake hands on this.”

“What?” asked Pringle, taken thus off his guard in his surprise. “You have agreed with the Duke?”

“Sure, we know our own minds very thoroughly,” replied my lord, nodding. “I warrant there is no misunderstanding between us. His Highness knows me, and is assured of me.”

“That is why, then, you are enlarged?” asked Pringle with his mouth agape.

“What other reason?” answered Cherwell, smiling very bland. “What, do you suppose any lusty fellow will consent to rot in prison when he may be breathing in the virgin air? Not I, Sir Mordaunt, not I indeed.”

“Then you are come——” says he anxiously.

“About this small affair,” says Cherwell, in a confidential voice; and the silly fop did not perceive with what he was being mocked. “’Tis a trifle, I protest, and yet what will you? A man must have some office to his wife. She is his chattel to be valued; and whoso stealeth her must pay for his theft i’ the market. I will admit that ’tis a hard bargain I have driven with his Highness.”

Pringle stared at him, in amazement, no doubt, to see him so shameless, who was reputed of a fiery sense of honour.

“Yet, sir, God forbid I should deny his Highness what he asks. Kings have an authority, and princes too, and I am a loyal subject,” and he tapped over his heart with a gesture. “Where is she laid?” says he indifferently.

For a space of time Sir Mordaunt hesitated, and it may be that something of suspicion entered his mind. “Whom mean you?” he stammered. “From whom come you?”

“Man,” said my lord impatiently, “said I not from

his Highness? to whom I faithfully promise I shall return. Nay, by the God that made me, so I swear that I shall stand in His presence to render an account of myself hereafter. Where is this pretty bird caged?"

"I know not of what you speak," stammered the young man again. "You have no sign with you."

"Why, is that all?" said my lord. "You shall soon have your sign," and he put forth a hand, laughing, towards Pringle, when at that moment a door opened softly from another chamber, and there stood in the open way the figure of a tall man. The light was against my lord's eyes, which were drawn suddenly by this interruption, and he stayed in the very nick of his act.

"Whom have we here?" he asked in another voice from that in which he had been bantering Pringle.

"'Tis one who has the honour of your slight acquaintance, my lord," says the new-comer. "Harry Trayle, at your service."

As Trayle spoke he came into the room, and the two men stood engaging one another's glances. The challenge was deliberate and quiet, and the gaze of neither fell; only my lord turned away. "I have no knowledge of you, Harry Trayle," says he, "nor no business with you. Sir Mordaunt and I have some affairs to transact, and the time passes. You would be kind to leave us together."

Pringle made a movement as if to implore Trayle, who, not heeding him, sate down. "I should be glad to oblige your lordship," he said slowly, "but Sir Mordaunt hath the misfortune to have eat some green apples and hath a colic. Hence he insists on my aid and attendance. No doubt, my lord, we shall make haste to transact these little matters the more readily for three heads."

My lord had guessed well enough how things stood, and upon what spirit Pringle must have leaned throughout these late events ; but he said only very mildly—

“I make no doubt ’twill be as you say, sir. ’Tis but a trifling point, the deliverance of a lady whom Sir Mordaunt—good honest man—has hidden in this castle. A mere iota, sir, I protest to you.”

“What !” cries Trayle, turning on Pringle, “you have a woman sheltered here ! Why have I not heard ? You have held this secret from me ! ’Swounds, my lord, Sir Mordaunt is a dissipating dog. He hath a gross appetite for the sex. None may resist him.”

“I would warn ye, sir,” said Cherwell, with a little change of voice, “that this is my lady Cherwell.”

“Oh !” cried Trayle, lifting his eyebrows, “oh, faith, your lordship’s lady. Confusion ! I vow I apologize. Lord, ha’ ye lost my lady to Sir Mordaunt here ?” and he giggled out a tiny laugh in his most elegant manner.

My lord took a step towards him, and laid a finger on his coat, while Trayle looked up indifferent.

“Hark ye, Mr. Trayle,” says he softly, “you were among those that drew a warning from me some months back, and that not so far distant from this house,” said he. “It needs that I repeat it, promising you your reward ; for I cannot answer what shall not fall down in that ruin of his Highness.”

“His Highness !” said Trayle brutally, “oh, is’t his Highness and my lady Cherwell ?”

My lord drew back and set a hand on his sword, his eyes blazing, so that Pringle called out in an agony—

“Harry, Harry !” and cried to him to remember Burford Bridge.

But Trayle, paying no attention to this remonstrance, addressed my lord again. "Come, my lord," said he, "put up that weapon yet awhile. I will admit that there is some colour for your anger; yet consider this, that you are but an interloper, and have little justice in your cause."

"What means this?" asked Cherwell in astonishment.

"Why, you thrust yourself into a game in which there was no room for you. Let me speak frankly. What scruple brought you to a barter about any girl's body? You had no right in that which affected you not. Faith, my lord, if the life of this world were conducted upon such rules there would be no living."

"I am master of that which affects me, and my will is law unto myself," said Cherwell simply.

"And that I will not deny," answered Trayle pleasantly. "But not to others. And you shall also take with that the charges and obligations of your claim. You may not avoid the burden so imposed."

"Mr. Trayle," says my lord, with his gentle laugh, "I see what it is I am looking on. I have the honour to converse with a promised Counsellor of James Second."

"Your lordship's very humble servant," answered Trayle, with a bow, "and if we have the misfortune to be opposed, why still, my lord, your servant in all else to command."

"I think, then," says my lord dryly, "but I will have this good servant of mine to conduct me to his prisoner."

"My lord, you mistake," said Trayle. "This is no house of mine; I know nothing of Sir Mordaunt's affairs."

"Bah!" said my lord, "why do we fence in this doubting fashion? I am accustomed to plain words and

plainer deeds. You have my lady Cherwell prisoned here."

"I will not answer for Sir Mordaunt, the rogue," says Trayle, with an elegant sneer.

"'Slife!" cried Pringle, who had taken courage in this play of words, "I understand you not, my lord. You have a strange errand to bully me thus. Zooks, yes."

My lord Cherwell drew off a glove, showing his delicate hand.

"I had thought," he said, "to find some reason in this castle, but God has made you mad before He shall destroy you. Yet again I ask you to consider of your answers." He looked at Trayle, who shrugged his shoulders with a smile.

"We have exchanged philosophies, my lord," he said, "and I find this conversation vastly pleasant. 'Tis a pity we should exchange aught else."

"Aye, 'tis a pity, as you say," said Cherwell slowly, "'tis a solemn pity for one that is promised to be King's Counsellor."

Trayle gave a tiny laugh. "Well, well, my lord," said he, "we shall fight at least upon an even footing, and as two men that may respect each other."

"Nay, by God," broke out my lord, "'tis not so I regard ye, Harry Trayle. What office hold ye to his Highness?—Mr. Pimp! Mr. Pimp!" he cried, infuriate.

"'Sdeath!" exclaimed Trayle, changing colour, "you say what no man may and live."

He drew his sword, and Pringle clamoured again in his alarm; but my lord, cooling quickly, made a gesture.

"Oh, give me time, give me time . . ." says he. "I will take my time," and turned to the door, muttering,

“’Tis the hand of Esau, but the voice is Jacob’s. I will strike at Jacob Second——” with which he saluted and left them both, greatly to their amazement.

He made no pause, but rode amain for Taunton, clattering over the little bridge while it was yet night; and instantly summoned a council of his followers. It was resolved to urge the rebellion forward, and declare for Monmouth at once.

“It is the principle of Succession,” said Cherwell, “and ere I have reached Bristol I shall have half the counties at my standard; so powerfully is this people moved.”

Westmacott was the more zealous, as he was afraid that my lord would be taken again, and they were resolved to hinder that.

“If we be once declared,” he said, “they may lay no hands on my lord.”

“No man shall lay hands on me till I chuse,” boasted Cherwell; “we have taken upon us that which we may not set down until the last of our blood is shed.”

He was very busy now ordering his forces, of which one hundred, rudely armed, were provided by Westmacott. But the citizens also were not backward, and men rode in daily from the outstanding country—farmers and yeomen and other rustics. So that presently he began to see his army swell and their hearts with them, till there was nothing this petty regiment might not do. They were desirous in their ignorance to march forthwith upon Bristol or any fortified town, and pressed the hazard upon Cherwell, who gave no sign. Indeed he had another design, as will appear. The news of these preparations were soon abroad, and came rapidly to London, and to the King’s ears. Yet did they not



understand with what ardour the campaign was being organized. My lord was at the heart of the trouble, and a posse was sent to seize this firebrand, but the officers were thrown into the river, and dismissed with laughter. A second attempt of the law was made with no better issues; for all that happened was that one of the rebels was wounded in the thigh, and a soldier was shot dead with a pistol. The day succeeding to this defiance my lord Cherwell rode out of Taunton at the head of two hundred and fifty men.

These recruits were for the most part very brave and foolish fellows, who had no knowledge of war, yet a sturdy faith in their own arms. A few there were of no principles and loose of tongue and habit, who were accustomed to ruffle and cross swords, and most of them had come from London to join my lord's fortunes. But the native of that country-side was a simple honest fellow, holding the Pope in detestation and fearful of the Duke. This motley pack marched northward upon the Bristol road.

But to fall on Bristol was no part of my lord's plan at the outset; he had another mark, which was the Castle of Barrs; and thither he directed his miscellaneous body. He was trusted very thoroughly. There was none there that dared gainsay him; and he was by his misfortunes and his rank picked out for their leader, as well as by his notable character and his qualities. Indeed he would have brooked no opposition. Not one of that strange assemblage would have stood up before him. He gave his orders, and they were obeyed; and thus marshalled the troop came through the woods and out upon the hills of Quantock. It was only then for the first time

that one, who was called Captain, a fanatical mercer of Taunton, asked of him a question.

“There is that before us which shall blood ye well,” says Cherwell, pointing to the Castle. “Ye have to prove yourselves.”

“Are we not for Bristol, my lord?” asked this Captain.

“Ye are for where I will,” says he, “and I choose that the rebellion shall begin here. It is a stronghold to be took.”

“Is it the Duke’s?” asked the man.

“It is a place where the Duke’s affections are set,” answered Cherwell, “but whether it were the Duke’s or the Devil’s I will have you take it.”

There was no demur on this, for the word went about that my lord had private knowledge, and was here to strike at the Duke’s deepest interests. Westmacott must have known, but he held his tongue, being wise and patient, and guessing perhaps that thus should the first blow be delivered, and the first triumph gained.

The people of this neighbourhood, being Somersetshire born, were in sympathy, and, though they wondered, offered what aid they might. Several of the leaders were known to them, Westmacott above all, who enjoined upon them that they should hold their speech. Yet this was impossible, and intelligence of this extraordinary expedition reached Barrs very quickly. The rebels arrived at dusk when the soft airs of night were rising warm and romantical; but ere Cherwell had pushed forward and entered the park a horseman had ridden forth with an alarm towards Bristol.

It so happened, though the fact was known to none of

these insurgents, that the news of the last repulse had reached Bristol very early, and the Governor, a capable and active man, being angered by what he heard, had got ready a troop of horse to catch this daring rebel. They were scarce prepared when a messenger ran in breathless, who had taken his information from a treacherous source, and communicated to the Governor that my lord, that arch-rebel, would march early upon Bristol.

“Ho! ho!” cries the Governor, “we will save him that trouble,” and inquiring further of the spy, he sent out a whole regiment with ordnance towards Taunton, expecting to encounter my lord’s party on the way.

But of this my lord knew nothing, and he drew up his men before Barrs about eight of the clock, demanding its surrender.

Mr. Trayle looked forth of a window in the ground floor, and surveyed them easily.

“You are back then, my lord,” said he; “are these your wolves? Faith, they have a hungry look. I pray I may not fall into their jaws.”

“I would speak with the master of this place, Sir Mordaunt Pringle,” said Cherwell, who had advanced within ten paces of the walls.

“I am no foot-boy to fetch and carry for you,” said Trayle. “An you want you must seek.”

“I desire the surrender of this house,” he said, “and all that it holds.”

“Are you looking for a maid that loves ye not, my lord?” asked Trayle grinning, for he had a most reckless courage.

“I am to conceive then I have your answer,” said Cherwell quietly.

For reply Trayle pointed at him a pistol. "What hinders that I tumble you where you stand, my lord," he said, "and so rid the world of a pestilent fellow?"

"Nought, Mr. Trayle, but what you owe to your own honour," says Cherwell indifferently, "if so be you have that still."

"You are right," says he, "I am hampered still. Faith, I should be ashamed to be so incommoded. I am like a boy or any green girl, my lord," and he laughed and snapped the lock idly.

"You are what God made you," said my lord, "and you shall be what I shall make you," and he went back to his men. "Fire!" says he.

The noise of that discharge streamed out with the smoke, and immediately upon it came the thunder of musketry from the Castle, which had been better prepared than they had thought. My lord's men kept up a fusillade from the shelter of the bushes and the darkness, firing at the windows; and one or two were hit upon either side. Yet so little hurt was done that it became clear nothing might be accomplished this way, and they should be there, spitting at each other till the morning.

"We must assault," commanded Cherwell, and himself prepared the attack.

He led with a packet of his men, getting into the shelter of the towers and flinging at the great doors; but they would not yield. So back runs my lord and returns with a pile of fuel, which he stacked before the doors, and fired with gunpowder. This attempt at once alarmed the defenders of Barrs, when they were aware of it, yet they found it impossible to pour their volleys on those

that were hidden under the towers. And very soon the oak gave way, and my lord with a dozen at his heels rushed through the blazing wood and brake in. In the hall that faced them were several drawn up with arms, and upon these the party fell, fighting in a mella. Among these was Sir Mordaunt Pringle, weakly defending himself, with a gout of blood upon his forehead. Presently there was a cry raised that the Castle was burning, and sure enough, the flames had mounted from the doors and were lapping about the front of the house. Yet ere this had happened the breach in the defences was observed from the rebel ranks, and, neglecting their orders, a hundred of them sprang forward in their heat and impatience, and followed into the Castle. These new-comers crowded the hall, and pressing closer incommoded Cherwell and his supporters. The poor resistance was thus broken down, and those who had opposed them, including Pringle, turned and fled, leaving one or two upon the floor. Yet just upon that comes a great deep sound from without, and a cry broke above the roaring of the fire.

“The soldiers!” they cried.

Cherwell looked about him, and perceived now with what a numerous company he was surrounded. He cursed in a fury, stamping.

“Get ye back!” he cried. “Ye fools!”

But the egress from the Castle was cut off upon the side by that conflagration. He ran up a staircase, and opening a window, looked forth into the open lawn which was brightly lit with the glare and was filled with men fighting. Then swiftly he flung himself forth to the ground.

## CHAPTER XVII

### WHAT PASSED IN BARRS ON THE NIGHT OF THE BATTLE

My lord Cherwell had given commands to his chief men not to abandon their post, where they were set among the shrubberies of the lawn. He had, moreover, appointed certain to be sentinels and to give warning of any alarm. Yet all these precautions had been abandoned in the excitement of those foolish countrymen. I do not think that Cherwell might be reckoned a good general of the field, inasmuch as, though he had a vivid fancy and insight, he was ever too rash, and willing to risk all upon a personal essay. He was of a character to determine the fortunes of war by a challenge between two captains, being never of that prudence that hangs back and waits, and is never heard. Yet the burthen of this rout rests not upon him, but upon those that disobeyed him. Whereas he would have used a dozen or so to do what he desired in the Castle, full half of his force broke their ranks and followed, and now when in twos and threes they hurled themselves from the windows after my lord, the mischief was already accomplished.

What had happened was this. The horseman that

rode to call help for the Castle encountered the Governor's troop on the main road, and communicated to them the state of affairs. Instead, therefore, of proceeding to Taunton the Colonel in charge directed his course to Barrs, where he had arrived in the nick of time to intercept the insurgents.

The outposts were overpowered, and the soldiers charged upon the scattered remnant of Cherwell's little army, breaking them and disordering them. When my lord leaped from the Castle he stood in an open space of ground, visited by gusts of light from the flaming towers, and obnoxious to every aim. Before him the garden was alight as with the noonday sun, and the faces of the soldiers were clearly visible. Two pieces of cannon were tearing at the fragments of his men, who, huddled like sheep, yet kept up a fierce rejoinder with what arms they had. My lord gathered round him such as had tumbled after him, and, issuing his commands sharply, set off at a run across the lawn. The rebels were sparsely armed with guns, and some were provided with pitchforks only and scythes, but many had pikes or pieces of iron shaped in that form. When Cherwell came up with them he bade them retire forthwith from that flame-swept and exposed place and shelter by the bushes from which they should never have withdrawn. That done, he collected his forces, and made his dispositions, throwing forward a line of pikemen only just in time. For the cannon ceased firing, and a body of horse came from the trees behind, thundering across the lawn upon them, and blood-red in that light. The farmers and the peasants were of a staunch brave stock, and held fast in the manner of their fathers at Naseby or Worcester ; the horses struck upon that cruel line of steel

and iron, and staggering, faltered away, and glanced off with a rebound.

This repulse appeared to astonish the soldiers greatly, who repeated their attempt only to find that the courage of that stubborn hedge had grown masterful with success. The peasants flung the horses off their pikes, and wielded their scythes with vigour, so that the assailants went back again in confusion. Amazed by this second rebuff, the Colonel gave fresh orders to his pieces, which began to speak again out of angry mouths, tearing up the pikemen. My lord saw that his men might not stand this, and there were but two courses open ; the one being to retreat by way of the park, when they should thereby acknowledge defeat and be cut up by the cavalry ; but the other to assume an offensive. Upon this latter he decided at once, seeing that all considerations pressed him that way. He gave his commands for an advance upon the cannon.

Ravel, that was in that march upon such belching mouths and came out of it unscathed, declared that there was scarce a hundred took part in it, the others being dead or wounded, or scattered in flight. They went forward without any noises, very still and determined, with their eyes upon that darkness from which the shot streamed on them. Half-way across the lawn there were scarce fifty remaining, and when they had reached the guns not two score. The reserves of the soldiery now came in and a fierce fight with steel and pistol ensued ; but the countrymen, having little skill at close quarters, were surely driven back, and retiring at last upon the bushes, pressed by their enemies, broke up and dispersed, receiving no mercy.



Thus it was that my lord, all stained with black and blood, but himself untouched, drew wide into a little patch of darkness that the shrubbery made, and labouring with his breath, cast up his predicament. The battle had gone against them, and they were doomed. Nay more ; across the park the shadows of those poor defeated peasants flitted before his eyes, and the sounds of combat still came to him whence they were dying. He turned without heed, and began to run stealthily towards the Castle of Barrs.

The front of the house where the fire was still raging was in the possession of the soldiers, who stood drawn up near by ; so slipping out of the light behind a buttress of masonry he got to the long wings of Barrs, and passed swiftly to the rear.

The grass ran up to the house on each side, in a very unequal ground, where the great moat had been, and here he sheltered, spying about for any entrance into the Castle. The immediate neighbourhood of the walls was as black as night, but at a little distance the gardens were lit with flashes, as it had been by a moon scudding among clouds. Presently he perceived a shadow that drew nigh quickly, issuing from the bushes, and disappeared at last into the streak of darkness that hid himself. He paused, resolved to brook no risks upon the business he was set ; and he heard softly approaching the feet of some man. Waiting a little longer he deemed the former upon him, and leaped out. His fingers took some person by the throat, and they struggled together, a smothered cry coming from the man, who presently gathered breath and called "My lord, my lord !" It was Ravel, who had hidden and watched for his master, and was now eager to

accompany him on what errand he was bound. My lord took off his hands.

“There is yet one found faithful,” says he. “Follow you me.” And without more words he began to go along the ruins of the ditch. Next they saw in the uncertain darkness something that hopped like a frog, and was still a moment; and ere it hopped again Ravel had it, pressing upon it furiously with his knee. There was a knife jumped out and grazed my lord’s arm, and a voice gurgled out—

“The Lord shall deliver them into our hands.”

“Who is this?” asks my lord, and he plucked his man away. “’Tis one of those from Taunton.”

“Faith, I know him now,” says Ravel, bending closer; “’tis a small yeoman I have spoken with.”

The man rolled up his eyes, and turned over there whither he had crawled, speaking no more.

“This lies against his Highness also,” muttered Cherwell through his teeth. “I will exact this and more of James Stewart.” A little after they came by a narrow window at the back of the house beyond which a lamp was swinging, so that a light fell out by the slit upon the moat. This gentle illumination, as a benignant star, very faint and wan, was shed upon a child’s face in the grass, where he lay sleeping.

Cherwell bent forward and touched him, and the child sate up, looking at them with terrified eyes.

“What dost thou here, child?” says he gently. Whereat the boy, who was some five years old, told, trembling, of how he had followed the soldiers, and, having heard the noise of cannon and the fighting, was frightened, and knew not whither to run, so that being

wearily in the end he lay down in the grass and thus slept.

“Fear ye not, babe,” says my lord, “we are not wicked men, but poor fellows that seek a refuge. Know you of a door into the Castle?”

The boy, having recovered of his fears, brightened at this, and began to babble childishly of what errands he had been, and how it was he that once fetched milk to this great house, telling of a lady he had seen that kissed her fingers to him from a window. Which news greatly provoked my lord, who questioned him further; but he could not remember from which window of those many windows.

“But ’twas here,” he says in his shrill voice and his rude accent. “’Twas by a door with great nails,” burring the words on his treble tongue.

“Guide me,” said Cherwell, and the little child in glee and wonder ran along the moat without hesitation, and stopped before an oak door that was spiked.

“When I ha’ fetched the milk,” says he joyfully, “I ha’ gone up a ladder,” and he pointed with admiration to the wall beside where a little wooden shutter was set in the stone. Cherwell examined this eagerly, and wrenching with his hands pulled out the door upon its hinges, so that an opening was disclosed, large enough to admit a man, and beyond in the darkness a stone stairway creeping up. Bidding the boy say nought to any, but to return in safety to his home, for that none would molest him, he gave him a piece of money, and slipped through the hole, Ravel following.

The stone stairway ran up in short flights, stopping at intervals before doors. Cherwell tried these, which

were thick and heavy (this being the older part of the Castle), but they budged not ; and thus he ascended to the very summit, where he heard the rats scampering under the roof, and a dismal noise of wailing. But the door here was eaten of worms and rotten, and he and Ravel with their shoulders managed to dislodge it, and so came out into a room, bare, dark, and loud to the tread.

That dismal sound was now greatly increased, and both marvelled what it might be. It came from some distant chamber, as they guessed, but they knew not how to reach it through the blackness. They must guide their steps at a hazard, and pitch upon what passages or doors they might. The house of Barrs, as I have related before, was very wide and rambling, and, by the lateness of the hour, there was little hope to find any chamber lighted. So that my lord and his servant pursued their way in a maze, feeling upon the walls and exploring with their feet, lest they should stumble or pass headlong into some descent. Says Ravel that they were thus for the space of an hour, visiting those empty chambers, which were full of a horrid silence that spoke in the ears. This struck a panic at last into the man's breast, and he besought his lord to fly.

"Whither," says Cherwell, mocking him, "will ye fly? Have you then the secret of this place? For my part I shall as easy to go forward as to go back,"—at which saying Ravel was flung into a sharper terror, and could scarce contain himself, the more so that he heard still that droning lamentation, falling and rising again like the crying of some tortured ghost. But my lord paid no heed, attempting even to draw near this sound, for he supposed that so he would come to that part of the house

which was inhabited. And a little afterwards he heard it closer, and soon again it rose from hard by, which set Ravel trembling. Next my lord stopped before a door, and thrust it open, giving a command to Ravel to stay ; and then he entered. Soon he came forth, from whence that direful noise issued, which was now sunk low and plaintive ; and whispers he—

“’Tis a poor soul in travail—’tis one that has a hurt by this fight, maybe a servant of the house. I know not ; for there is nothing visible but blackness, and this groaning rises from the floor. I laid my hands upon that which is there,” says he, “and ’tis cold and quiet. Is there no life in this place ? Let us away.”

With that they went forward again, and at length perceived a shining beneath some door which Cherwell opened, and the light of a lanthorn streamed out upon the corridor. He went in and perceived a great bed with a canopy, and upon the bed in his torn foul raiment lay Sir Mordaunt Pringle. He lay like a hog, surfeited of wine and food, and it was plain he had celebrated the victory with a carousal. Upon a table in that great chamber was a horn of ink and feathers, and my lord Cherwell took a piece of paper quickly, and wrote upon it.

“I will leave a *memento mori* to this carrion swine,” says he. And seizing a dagger from the walls he stuck it through the paper and drove the weapon to the hilt into the pillow by Sir Mordaunt’s head. Ravel saw the writing, which was this only—

“*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,*” and thereto he had put his name. Taking the lanthorn he came out, and after that they went with

greater ease, walking in a part of the Castle which was used. Yet there seemed poor chance that my lord would achieve what he desired, until unexpectedly he heard a voice, low and soft and broken, from a chamber at the bottom of a passage, which led to one of the towers. He set his hand to the door, and it was locked and barred.

“Here is whither we are bound,” he says to Ravel eagerly. “This is our journey’s end,” and he flung himself against the oak, which creaked but yielded not. The predicament in which they stood was not easy, for it would have been impossible to discover the keys in that labyrinth. Yet my lord halted not, nor feared. He drew a pistol that was still charged, and with the aid of his lanthorn, blowing in the pan, he thrust it to the lock and fired. The report came back along those corridors with great reverberations like the innumerable sounds of battle; but the door bent and gave way, and Cherwell thrust it back with his weight, and opened a gap to admit him, breaking into a white still chamber.

At the first sight of that room, which was all white, white as to the walls, and very white with clothes and garments, glowing in a white dim light, it seemed that he had come into a place of faery. But ’twas not that; rather it was the dwelling-place of some white spirit that prayed and suffered. For my lord’s eyes next fell upon his lady, the Countess of Cherwell, where she knelt, in her white raiment, whispering her prayers to God for succour. She had started and cried in alarm, but when her eyes fell now with recognition upon him she gave a louder cry, and struggling to her feet ran to him, weeping and calling on him and weeping again. She was clad

only in her night-rail, yet she laid her head upon his breast and clung to him, moaning like a dove without words. But in a little she withdrew her arms, and stepped back, looking on him with alarm and shame, and yet with gladness.

“Ye are come to take me, my lord?” she said in her broken voice. “Indeed I knew that you would come. I have been awaiting you. It has been a long winter, my lord, but I have seen the spring to-day from my prison window.”

“Dear heart,” said he, “ye are delivered of your prison. The walls are broke down. Ye have your passage into freedom. Ye shall do as ye list. There is none shall stay ye, never again.” He drew her to him and soothed her.

“My lord,” she says in a weeping voice, “I have put you in great peril of your life. Ye go abroad in fears. Yea, they told me of what you have suffered, and on what a thread your safety hung. I am not worthy of this sacrifice.”

“You are Countess of Cherwell,” said he, “and you are worthy of all that the Earl of Cherwell shall give ye. Ye are my wife, and what I proffer, that is your due and privilege.”

“Aye,” she said whispering, for she was torn with evident emotions and scarce knew what she said, so wrought upon was she; “aye, I am but a poor maid, but your wife—the wife to one that is strong to defeat princes. I am proud, my lord, to bear that title. You have delivered me from this evil. You are sovereign in the eyes of one poor soul that hath been saved,” she cried. “Nay, my lord, ye are my God that hath delivered me—

What say I?" and she wrung her hands, and kneeled upon the floor in her distress, tossed about with the conflict of her feelings.

"Come," says Cherwell softly, "'tis time we were on the way and free of this house, lest others try to hold us."

"What!" she called, leaping to her feet, her hair falling about her shoulders. "Is there still danger? Are you pursued even here? Will they not suffer ye to rest, these wicked men that would rob me of my honour and you of your life?"

"We are scattered over the country-side," said he. "The King's troops brake my poor yeomen; but that shall not come between your safety. Come, or they will be upon us."

"Yea, will I come," said she in her trepidation, flying to the further side of the chamber where her raiment lay. "I will come, my lord."

But now there was a cry from Ravel at the door, who had been in great alarm by reason of the report of the pistol; and immediately on that my lord, turning, saw Trayle standing in the way, with his hand on his sword and a smile on his face.

"I give you my compliments, my lord," said Trayle, bowing, "'tis hard to know where you may be taken. You are like the fiend that goes about the earth. And I blame you not that you should come to rest at last in a lady's chamber. But you were warned, my lord, you had your warning."

"Now, by God, Harry Trayle," cried my lord, "ye are come here to die," and he took his sword forth.

"Nay, but to lead you back to the Tower, where they shall take better care of you this time," says Trayle, still smiling.



On that my lady cried out, "The Tower ! was it there? Ah, my dear lord !" and she seized on his hand, carrying it to her bosom. But he put her aside quickly, and called Ravel to pull to the door.

"I warned ye also," said he to Trayle in a quiet voice. "It seems that when I spoke with you last 'twas a service over your dead body that I read, Mr. Trayle. Now is your appointed time. You are entered here to die. There is no hope but that ye shall die in this room."

Trayle made a gesture of assent, but looked aslant at my lady, who cowered by the bed.

"Nay, by the light of heaven," cried Cherwell, understanding him, "it is here—here, you shall fall—in this room and before the feet of her that you have wronged so foully. Guard ye," and he ran upon him.

My lord pressed him like a madman, but with quiet eyes, engaging with the craft bred of a great hate and a great vengeance. Trayle was a taller man, and thicker of arm and body, yet he seemed not then to be so strenuous as my lord, who pushed him back and back, and ever held his point for the heart, slight, dancing, ineluctable, and singing and swinging like a reed. Trayle fell away before his frenzy, and a look of doubt rose in his face, taking the place of that indifferent smile. He was a man of reckless courage, with little principle to guide a stout heart ; and in despite of his vices, which were neither few nor small, he had that in him which might not derogate from his blood. He fought thus a hopeless fight without failing spirit, asking for no mercy, but keeping his gaze turned towards my lord's front. It was as though one shrugged his shoulders at his death

with a little simpering smile, that meant still to be merry.

My lord fainted and shot under his guard, and Trayle, falling sideways on the white virginal couch, rolled to the floor and lay still, close by where my lady crouched with wide and terrified eyes; so that in the falling he drew so near that the blood from his wound ran over her naked feet, and dyed her white gown. And thus strangely were my lord's words fulfilled, and he paid for his crime at her very feet. My lord came forward.

"Aye," says he, looking on him, "'tis meet you should wash away the stain you would have set there," and he dropped his weapon down. "Harry Trayle! Harry Trayle—so now is judgment done upon you! So are ye executed!" and he turned away. "I would ask you, my lady, to be quick," he says in another voice, "for there is a journey before us."

In a maze of fear and horror she set about preparing herself, as my lord walked to the door; but presently she came forth to him, white of face, yet ready; and, with Ravel carrying the lanthorn before them, they picked their way presently forth of the sleeping Castle.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### OF THE MEETING WITH A HIGHWAYMAN, AND THE INN IN THE QUANTOCKS

MY lady Cherwell fluttered forth of the Castle of Barrs as a wounded dove that is freed of her cage ; and my lord and his man conducted her across the lawns. At the entrance of the gardens was set a picket which caused them a detour, but pushing through a gap in the great hedge of hazels that girded about the pleasaunce, they came into the open park, and proceeded diligently in the dark. Yet were they not to escape thus, for soon an alarm was raised, and they heard the sound of pursuers, as it seemed behind them and upon all sides, breaking out of the night.

My lord bade them to increase their speed, and himself supported my lady by the body. Yet there was no chance so to fly from those hounds, and he brought up quickly in a black great darkness below a vast oak.

“There is one thing to be done,” said he, “and that is to reach cover ere the dawn is here, and while the sun tarries.”

“They have spies out,” says Ravel, who could make out figures moving upon every side in the lessening dusk.

“Pish!” says Cherwell, “a spy can die, but not a regiment of pursuants.”

“My lord, whither go we?” asked Ravel.

“We go to Heriot Deane,” said he. “I will not draw rein till I establish myself in my own house, and then Jacob Second shall find me if he may.”

“The roads will be barred, my lord,” he said.

“I will unbar them,” says Cherwell.

“Taunton will be in the hands of the soldiery,” said Ravel.

Cherwell was silent for a time. “I have a great pity for that poor folk,” said he presently. “I would have led them to victory and it had been possible; but it was not so destined. They have loved overmuch, and what they shall receive is not their due.” Next he looked about him, with his lady leaning still upon him and against the tree, and breathing deeply. “There is a denser piece of blackness over yonder,” he said. “If we might win thither we should be safer.”

And with a gesture he sent Ravel forward, himself following with my lady. These three picked their way with all the caution that they might use, passing once or twice very near to some man in the gloom. But soon they had reached the darker place, which proved now to be a coppice on the borders of the park. Ravel, entering this first, stumbled into a hole or ditch and rolled over with a noise of crackling branches; and, as it happened, one of the pursuers being close by, this was heard, and fetched several towards the coppice in a trice. Ravel plucked himself forth and pushed through the under-wood, which was of nut and small oak and ash, breaking a passage thus for my lady Cherwell. Yet this

journey was acknowledged by that very act, and the news was brought to those behind, who followed after with shouts. By a hazard Ravel struck now upon a pathway and they began to go with less sound, so that the enemy knew not in which direction to pursue, and were driven to scatter themselves over the wood. In such jeopardy the fugitives went forward for close on half-an-hour, by which time the dawn threatened through the budding leaves, and they were aware that they must find some hiding-place or be taken by those that beat the wood. The coppice had now grown into a forest, in which the trees were larger, and more separate, but they guessed not towards what they moved, nor knew any the fall of that country. By and by they issued upon a wider path, which was for bridle horses, and ran down a steep declivity to a little grumbling brook ; and here they were brought to at once by the sight of a man on horseback, who stood in the way and watched them.

“ We are cut off,” says Ravel ; but my lord said no word, only leaving Lady Cherwell with his man, he went forward to the stranger, with his resolution plain upon his face.

This man was young and strong of limb, and of a raw and reckless handsomeness, and he gave a grin at Cherwell as he came up.

“ Sink me,” says he, in a rollicking voice, “ but you have an insolence so to beard me. Damn ye, know ye not who I am ? Get away, louse, or I will riddle ye through.”

But my lord saw at that how he had been drinking, and that he was now far gone ; so he did nought that he

had intended, but made him a bow, fearing that the fellow might hamper them, should he quarrel.

“I crave your pardon, sir,” said he. “I desire not to stand in your excellency’s light.”

“That’s said very well,” cried the other, laughing. “But, damme, who are you to be so free with your excellencies? A lean fellow with a good fat purse, I warrant.”

“Sir, we are poor wayfarers, having no money,” answered Cherwell, seeing with whom he must deal.

“I ha’ heard such a tale afore,” replied the highwayman, “and I ha’ found something always sticking i’ the bottom. Disgorge, ye rogue!” he cried.

My lord frowned, angry to be put about by this silly calamity, and said he sharply—“Come, come, my good rascal, we are your superiors, and hold you. I bid you go by.”

“Split me for a muck-worm,” cried the fellow, with a noisy laugh. “It may be that I see ye for more than you are along of good red Burgundy; but, damme, I’ll fight ye, whether you be more or not.”

Cherwell uttered an exclamation of disgust; for, indeed, he could ill afford to tarry there and bandy words or blows, with the troopers at his heels. For a time he wavered, uncertain whether to submit to this robbery or not; but the knave presently gives a laugh and slaps his thigh.

“Rot me!” said he, “but I spy petticoats. Faith, you shall not go so cheaply, my pretty birds; for while I am now released of one adversary, I am the better also of two artful eyes. ’Tis a sight that sets heart in me; by

God it doth," and he rapped out a free expression in his tipsy merriment.

That sufficed for Cherwell, who, seizing him by the arm, flung him from the horse with an oath. But the highwayman, for all his drunkenness, leaped to his feet again with agility, and, swearing foully, set upon my lord with his weapon, vowing he would tear the vitals from him for his pains.

My lord had his sword already in hand, and desired no better than to end the pother at once, but almost ere iron met iron, his opponent put up an arm, as if to warn him, and turned his face about towards the wood which the grey light was kindling.

"Hold, sir," said he in a sober voice, and listened for some moments ; then he looked at Cherwell, "You shall not be denied, if you have the spunk. None has thrown that charge ever against Dick Ryder. Yet, as a gentleman, you will consider that there is some peril in which I stand. There is a posse that I have escaped out of Bath, and if I be not mistook here it comes."

Cherwell, though he could hear nothing of what the other hinted at, cried out impatiently—

"Faith, Mr. Ryder," said he, "you need be in no distress. 'Tis not for you these are here, but rather for me."

"What !" says Ryder with a shout. "Are you and these friends also escaped from justice ?—such a fine gentleman as this," and he laughed aloud.

"Silence !" cried Cherwell with an imperious gesture. "Ye will have us all taken. I would ask you to remember that, whatever be our private quarrel, we are in a common bond against the law."

“Why,” says Ryder heartily, “and so we are. You are after my heart with your plain speech. And I will e’en show you my earnest.” With which he paused, listening again, and to all of them now were noises audible. Ryder made a sign to my lord that he should wait, and crept into the wood very quietly, and very swiftly. In a little there came to them other sounds, as of a struggle, and next the toby-man re-appeared, putting back his blade, and seeming mightily content with himself.

“Let us begone from this path,” he whispered, “for there are others behind that lank-faced lubber. And maybe we may then resume what was dropt,” with which he beckoned them through the arch in a great bush, and down a privy hidden way. When they were sheltered where he desired, this Ryder drew up with his bridle on his arm.

“Now, who may ye be?” said he, civilly enough.

“I am the Earl of Cherwell,” says my lord shortly.

“What!” cried the other with a start. “Are you then he that is newly run out of the Tower, and before the noses of the King’s guards? Rip me, my lord, I have a kindness for ye. I ha’ broken out of the jug myself,” and he struck forth his hand in a free and friendly fashion.

My lord observed him lightly and smiled, taking the hand.

“Then we are both in a case, friend Ryder,” he says.

“Nay, my lord,” says Ryder, “but we are met in similar fortunes. Our destinies pursue us; faith, we touch fates.”

“What mean you?” asked Cherwell.

“Why, there are your soldiers after you,” he said, “and



here comes my posse at my back. We are marked men, and I know not which stands in the deeper peril. But if you will throw your lot with me, we will challenge together, and make a pretty pair to do so."

My lord considered, for the day was already upon them. "Whither go you?" he asked.

"Why, Dick Ryder is no pap-fed babe," said he with a swagger. "I can reckon up the chances with any; and whoso ventures into this wild Quantocks must know on what he rests. Know you the country?"

My lord answered him nay; and says Ryder, "Then you will be taken of a surety, you and my lady, if 'tis she and no wench ye have beguiled. Come, I have that to shelter me not far distant, and you shall be welcome when you come there to share with me."

"Mr. Ryder," said my lord, with his quick courtesy and sharp decision, "you are a good friend. I thank you for your offer. We will accompany you."

The highwayman led them further upon this by-way into a thicker and a darker wood, keeping ever a watch with his ears, and brought them out at last to a rise of the hills like a steep wall. Here the sun, being now up, shone upon the red earth and sparkled among the dew; but the party was grievously tired and footsore."

"They may not come hither," said Ryder. "There is no officer nor writ runs here."

And indeed the place appeared to be very desolate, the hill rising as a spur of those Quantocks and commanding the vale of a great wood, used by few and penetrated by none. As they went up, this scene opened forth below them, and they could descry the spires of a city far away, glittering under the sun. But on the top of the ascent

there was an open space of heath swept by the winds, and beyond, the rolling hills of the range. Upon the margin of the heath, and separated from it by a road, stood a poor-looking tavern, very ancient and decrepit. Before the door was a great oak, bare and dead, that had been blasted by lightning, and it reached gaunt arms to Heaven, calling for mercy or crying defiance, according to the fancy of the spectator. And out upon the heath rose a fellow like it, that seemed to answer to it in the morning wind.

To this unfriendly house Ryder took the way, and fetched up there, calling out the innkeeper.

“Stay,” says Cherwell ; “if we are to rest here, what manner of travellers shall we be ?”

“Damme, what you will,” says Ryder. “This fellow plays no tricks on me, I warrant. ’Tis worth more than his vitals to blab. Rot me, he’ll keep his tongue. He’ll not wag it,” and then he added, as something that came to him of prudence, “yet give him not your quality.”

When the innkeeper was come, he greeted Ryder very humbly, calling him captain, and offered glances askew at the others.

“These are friends of mine, Daddy Cock,” says Ryder indifferently. “And you shall see them well-used or hang, old dungfork.”

“To be sure, captain,” says he, casting his villainous eyes about him. “I will bid any friend of yours welcome, Captain Dick, though they be more used to fly ye than seek ye,” and he sniggered in an ugly fashion.

“Go to,” says Ryder, “and let Betty prepare a breakfast with some of your ale ; and see that this lady is tended by her.”

Presently, then, there was a meal laid for these fugitives, and thereupon the girl, Betty, that was the innkeeper's daughter, took my lady Cherwell to her chamber, bidding her to rest ; while my lord flung himself upon the floor of the little room, and, being worn out, fell asleep, Ravel nodding in another corner.

The sun was past noon when he awoke and began with his restless habit to cast about him for plans. My lady, too, had gotten over her fears and her troubles and wore a more quiet face, out of which her beauty sprang, surprising. And then it was that my lord learned how she was spirited away, and what had befallen her at Barrs. It seems that when Cherwell had left the Manor-house and had gone back to the inn at Durcombe my lady was left alone in her rooms, with none to interfere nor to reproach her. She wondered at this greatly, but supposed that Lady Ellicott had surrendered and withdrawn from the struggle now that her daughter and my lord were wed. After a long time, however, Lady Ellicott came to her, and, speaking very coldly, vowed that she desired nothing better than to see the last of her. She called her ingrate, and bade her begone to her husband, appearing to be in a great frenzy at her defeat. "There is word come for you to join your ravisher," she said, "and go ye shall this minute. I will have no more sight of you."

Thereupon the Countess, having no suspicions, but believing that she was sent for, got ready and was put into a carriage. This set off, but drove another road than to the inn, which alarmed her. She cried out to the coachman, who paid no heed, but later came to a pause, and some one opened the door and entered, whom she

made out in the gloaming to be Grimshaw. He was very civil and feigned to reassure her, saying that she was going whither she would be safe and not repent her arrival. And so, seeing there was no hope for her, and that her devilish enemies had triumphed again, she said no more, resigning herself but carrying a beating heart. Thus they came to Barrs, where she was expected, and allotted rooms in that tower, being kept a close prisoner, and seeing only Trayle, and her attendants. There was talk, as she learned, of her being brought to London, but no doubt the occasion was not auspicious, and it was desired that matters should first settle down, perhaps by my lord's death. This was the history of her captivity till my lord came to her.

My lord, hearing it, was the more infuriate, raging against all that were concerned in so foul a betrayal, but chiefly against the Duke, who, as I consider, may have been wholly ignorant of this artifice. Of those who had conspired in such an abominable plot, several were dead, the last of these being Trayle. But there lived still Grimshaw, and that dark shadow of a villain, Fargus, and he whom Cherwell looked upon as the arch-enemy and cause of all the evil. Nevertheless he lost none of his spirit by reason of these discoveries. Indeed they enlivened him the more they incensed him, and the consciousness that he had so far succeeded in his purpose stimulated him into gaiety, despite what hung over him. The man Ryder, too, was, as my lord always declared, an agreeable companion, and these two entertained one another at supper merrily. There was but one room in that wretched tavern in which meals might be served, but Lady Cherwell, being unfit for the company of such as

might come in, kept her chamber, where she was tended by the wench, Betty, a kindly girl enough.

My lord and Ryder sat alone drinking of a good wine which the highwayman had ordered.

“Faith,” says he, “I know sound liquor, and what is more, my lord, I know whence this comes, and how it is fetched from Bristol. You may fill your paunch,” he said in his coarse way, “and ye will never regret it. You and I, my lord, must bide low and wait. ’Tis on the sufferance of fortune we must both content ourselves. Yet I ha’ never seen the time when Dick Ryder might not make terms with fortune.”

“You are a happy man,” said Cherwell, smiling, “and you have a gullet for good wine, as I acknowledge.”

“Lord!” cried Ryder, “you say well. I live a life, I do. There is none other on the road that keeps me company with a level foot, I tell you. I am cock o’ my walk, my lord, and ’tis no bad business in which to place a square head and a stout arm. See ye here, my lord,” he went on, as he drank further, “I have a fancy for your spunk. I ha’ heard things of you. You use a brave weapon, and you ply your wits. I do no more myself. But, sink me, I have no stomach for this silly matter of kings and princes. King Charles is enough for me, and if so be King James be not so good, why there are still fat pockets on the lay. There’s where you should be, my lord, for I warrant you have an eye for a wench, as madam above will prove; and good wenches and good wine make the world go round, by God, they do.”

My lord was greatly tickled with this diversion, and drew out the fellow, both laughing together; so that presently they did not observe one that came in, and

called on the innkeeper for ale, sitting down in a corner to drink it. He was a rustic-looking fellow, but with two keen eyes, and he fixed them on my lord, who soon perceived him and gave him an indifferent stare. But not so Ryder, though he had drunk deeper; for he jumped to his feet angrily, cursing the man for a rogue, and asking him what he did there in the company of his betters. My lord stood, much entertained at this outbreak, and the peasant's consternation; but Ryder whispered to him for all his liquor—

“Get away,” he says. “Swounds, would you have the whole place see ye? You are a marked man.”

Cherwell took the suggestion and slipped out of the door, leaving Ryder to deal with the poor wretch; and soon after he put himself to bed on the floor, with Ryder for watch-dog.

But what with the wine he had taken and the great weariness of his body he slept soundly, and was only awoke when the sun was up by the voice of Ryder in his ears.

“Wake, my lord,” says he, “for the hounds are on you. Wake!”

My lord sat up and put his hand on his sword-belt, gazing about him vacantly.

## CHAPTER XIX

### OF THE FLIGHT FROM SOMERSETSHIRE

THIS was no other than the truth, indeed, for what Ryder had feared was now come to pass. The stranger that had wandered into the tavern the night before was a ploughman from the valley, who, though taking no part in any political opinions, was a curious fellow, and recognized my lord with staring for one he had seen at Taunton. Upon his dull wits is slowly grafted the memory of who it was, and off he goes in a state of excitement, spreading among his cronies where my lord of Cherwell was hid. One of them being an avaricious man, and in no sympathy with the feelings of that district, carried the news by night to Barrs, and with this direful issue that now met my lord.

He got upon his feet quickly, and, flinging away his drowsiness, asked of Ryder some questions.

“Nay,” says the toby-man, “there is no chance that you may resist them—not the least in the world. Stab me, I ha’ fought many at a time, one down, t’other come on, but I would not face this regiment of Jack Skittles. ’Tis madness.”

“Very well,” says Cherwell coolly, “then what other course have we?”

"Why," said Ryder, "they are come for you, not for me; yet there never was a time when I went back on a guest. 'Tis my reputation that is at stake, and, damme, let me eat muck if you or the lady be taken."

"Captain," said Cherwell, "you are an excellent fellow, whatever be your trade; and I am none so sure that the trade also be not excellent," he added. At that in came Ravel with the news that a dozen horsemen were before the door, and on his heels the innkeeper, crying that they demanded the body of the Earl of Cherwell, a rebel to his king and country.

"Keep 'em in parley," said Ryder to the innkeeper; "we will not touch such scum as this."

And no sooner was the man out of the room than he bade Cherwell to fetch his lady, who was at once brought down by Betty.

"What do you?" asked this latter in alarm and in wonder, seeing that he had vanished into a small cupboard, where food was kept. "What do you, Captain?"

"Keep your mouth, you pretty jade," says he in a great humour; "galloping Dick is no chicken; he has tricks even under your white nose." And he seemed to them to be dragging at a flagstone in the floor. Presently there was something rolled back with a noise in the darkness, and Ryder came forth.

"There is a way of refuge," said he: "the back of the tavern hangs upon the precipice below; and there is a ladder of rope. It has rested there these two years against my need. Hold the door, Betty," he commanded. So one by one these amazed fugitives descended into the hole and came out upon a ledge of rock, upon the very top of that deep vault. Away below they could perceive



the swaying of the wood, and the noise of a great sighing, like to the ocean, came up to their ears. And after them followed Ryder, closing the slab of stone.

“We are none too soon,” said he, “for they are now entered and seeking you. Yet they cannot suppose that they have you not secure, and there lies our safety.”

He spoke in a whisper and felt below him on the ledge as he did so, bringing out next a long stout rope knotted into a rude ladder, which he flung gently down. The height was some eighty feet sheer, with a few bushes and grasses growing at intervals on the steep rock, so that my lady Cherwell feared to look down. ’Twas doubtless an old road of escape for evil-doers and those who fled the law; and it may well be that for this reason the tavern had been so built, projecting over the void, and with no windows opening on that side.

“Go you first,” said Cherwell to the highwayman; “I will bide and hold the rock, if so be they discover us.”

Ryder said no word, but, nodding, seized on the rope and slipped down swiftly, the ladder swaying and swinging under his weight. They watched him until he had disappeared into the trees, and then my lord gave a sign to Ravel.

“You must go with him, madam,” said he to his wife, who started and then held her lips firm.

“I will go,” she said.

Ravel descended over the side of the cliff, and my lady put her trembling foot after him, yet with no hesitation; and so they two went down, the man guarding his mistress and keeping the rope taut for her by his burthen. By this time there was a loud noise in the house above, and a sound of feet on the stone flags of the cupboard.

My lord threw himself over and began to creep down as quickly as he might ; yet by the time he was half-way to the bottom there was a voice from overhead, and he saw, looking up, the face of a man regarding him. He fell faster down the rungs, but ere he had reached thirty feet of the bottom the rope slackened and dropped, cut through by a knife, and he shot down through space. By good luck the branches of a tree intervened, breaking his fall, and so he tumbled easily to the ground with no more than a bruised shoulder. He leaped up.

“We must be away,” he said hastily.

“Aye,” says Ryder, “the horses are ready.”

“What horses ?” cried Cherwell in amazement.

Ryder grinned. “D’ye think I hold my life so little precious as to take no precautions ?” said he. “Split me, no ; there is a brace of good horses, with Calypso herself, ready in these stables whene’er I tarry here.”

At this my lord perceived that he was at the back of some rude building, and, swiftly following Ryder, he made his way to the front and entered in where two horses stood in waiting, with Ravel by them.

“There is a rough way hence towards Taunton,” said Ryder. “But we must be off, ere they have gained the valley. Ye must carry your lady.”

“I will do so,” says Cherwell, “and Ravel here shall run. There is nothing against him.”

Ryder went to the door with his bridle on his arm, and he gave suddenly a low cry, swearing a great oath. “By God,” said he, “that stinkpot has betrayed me. I will be avenged on Daddy Cock ; rip him for a toad !”

The cry had brought Cherwell to his side, who, looking forth of the half-open door, perceived before the

stable half-a-dozen soldiers, and one among them whom he saw to be Grimshaw. The sight of that worm maddened him, and says he to Ryder—

“Mr. Ryder, I drag no man into my quarrels. Get ye gone. But as for me, there is no man or men alive in King Charles’s army that shall take me.”

“By Heaven,” said Ryder, “you are after my heart; and as for leaving ye, there is time enough when some Jack puddings have tasted of Dick Ryder’s steel.”

“I thank you, sir,” says my lord, and then to Ravel, “Stay you here,” he said. “We will engage them; and it maybe you shall have a chance to escape with my lady in the turmoil. They will pay you small heed, I warrant, for the next half-hour. And if I be dead, direct your ways to my cousin, Sir Hilary Mace, and say to him that I leave this lady in trust.”

He said no more, but, getting a-horseback, stood in the doorway with Ryder, and pushed the door wide open with his foot, holding his sword before him.

At the first sight of them as they came out, the soldiers, who were all horsed, drew closer, presenting their weapons. But Grimshaw, who seemed puffed up with a little office, set up his hand as though to restrain them.

“My lord,” said he in his civil voice, “it is useless to resist. You must surrender.”

“Out of my way,” said my lord shortly; but making no movement on his own part.

“My lord, ’tis madness in you,” remonstrated Grimshaw.

“Rat,” says Cherwell, “get back to your sewers, or I will spit you,” and he raised his blade.

But Grimshaw was full of authority, and no doubt

he deemed those soldiers at his back to be a sufficient protection.

“I charge you to surrender in the name of the King,” he cried.

“Ye will have it, then ; ye will have it,” said Cherwell, and urging his horse forward with a sudden prick of his weapon, he passed the point through the attorney’s neck, crying, “That for your treachery, that for your foul procuration ;” and leaving there the sixth man dead of that conspiracy, he passed upon the astonished soldiers with Ryder by his side. There was a discharge of fire-arms, but neither was touched, and contenting themselves with cutting at a fellow apiece, the two galloped down the rocky way into the valley, with the pack in pursuit. The path was very rough, being strewn with boulders, and hedged in by trees, so that they rode one after the other. Yet the pace at which they fled was very high, despite the peril of the road, which was the greater that a branch grew low here and there across the way. Nevertheless, my lord paused soon to look behind him, eager to see if all the troop was following. Whether it was that by the death of Grimshaw, the sole person who had an interest in the seizure of my lady was removed, or that the excitement of the chase had proved too severe for them, he counted six fellows in pursuit, streaming down towards the bottom which he and his companion had reached. With which sight he was well satisfied, and rode on again briskly, overtaking Ryder, who had tarried for him. The highwayman shouted that they must make for the deeps of the forest and there hide, adding that his horses were more than a match for any in his Majesty’s service.

“If that be so,” says Cherwell, “I am for Taunton.”

“Why,” said Ryder, “the town will be in the King’s hands.”

“The less reason they will expect me there,” said he, and Ryder, admiring this ingenuity, made no opposition, but coming into a more open track, the two settled down to outstride their pursuers.

This they judged was done towards mid-day, when no sign of the enemy was to be seen, and they believed that the chase was abandoned. Late in the afternoon they drew near to Taunton, and my lord was persuaded to wait until dark, lest any might recognize him. But after sunset they entered, challenged by none, and Cherwell proceeded to the house of Westmacott. He had no thought to find Westmacott here, believing him to be dead or taken, but he was desirous of preparing a retreat for Lady Cherwell, knowing that the peril was now shifted to himself since the deaths of Trayle and Grimshaw. For the time, at least, she was under no hazard, until, that is, the news reached London, where Lady Ellicott was, and those who contrived the plot should resolve to go further against that innocent lady. Yet, to his amazement, Westmacott himself opened the door to my lord, greeting him with respect and even affection; for he had a great admiration towards him. My lord told how it was with him, and asked the other why he was thus secure in his house.

“There is none of our staunch fellows but will hold their tongues,” said Westmacott. “There is no witness against me, only report. I put a smooth face on, and sit at my receipt of custom. I am not exacted yet by the Lord. I shall yet live to fight His battles.”

And this was true ; for the man fell in the Duke of Monmouth's rising some two years later. Of such stuff were these Somersetshire rebels made.

My lord consulted with Westmacott on his movements, begging him to gather news of the Countess, and this Westmacott promised, advising my lord to lie at a little village towards Sherborne, where he might receive intelligence and be beyond detection.

To this Cherwell assented, and that night rode with his companion, who would not leave him, to Ealtry, keeping himself very close. He remained there all the next day, when Westmacott himself made his appearance in a coach, and, the door being opened, out stepped Lady Cherwell, very pale and smiling. It seemed that one of Westmacott's messengers had come upon my lady and Ravel in a hamlet in the vale of Taunton, and had fetched them forthwith to the merchant, by whom they were hospitably entertained. He had then furnished them with his carriage, and himself accompanied them to join my lord, which he did because he had other news to impart. The news of my lord's escape had gone to Bristol, and brought out a regiment, which was to secure his person at any hazard. The roads were held towards London, and Westmacott feared that the party could not break through.

"I will break through a dozen regiments," says Cherwell, "rather than be foiled of my aim," and he offered his gratefulness to Westmacott, telling him that he knew no better friend, and that they should yet fight together.

"I trust so, my lord ; we are in such an One's hands that I rest all upon my faith," was his reply.

When he was gone, my lord turned to Ryder comically.

“We are in the devil of a case,” says he. “Get ye back, Captain, ere it be too late.”

But Ryder swore angrily and with great heat that he would not budge, crying that he cared not one straw for any man, and that his sword was as good as my lord’s, on any occasion, as he was willing to prove.

“Fie !” said Cherwell, laughing, “would ye fight me ? Nay, if you are so bold you shall be turned upon a squadron,” and made no more remonstrance with him. It was nine o’clock at night when they set out, my lord and my lady in the coach with Ravel, and the highwayman riding in the front, by way of an advance guard. As there was the fear of being taken, it was resolved to make a long circle southward, and so come into Hampshire by the New Forest. They travelled thus all night, hoping by such prudence to escape the lines if they should cross them anywhere ; and halted by six in the morning at an inn some miles north of Dorchester to break their fast. Here were inquiries made, but they could discover nothing of any soldiers, and so presently resumed their journey across the Hampshire border, meaning to go by the Forest.

The sun was very bright and bountiful, for the spring was coming on a stride, and the country was leaping into flower and leaf ; and so both my lord and his wife, thus far delivered of anxiety, rode with light hearts, and took a pleasure in the scene. At least my lady did so, though she did not know what awaited her at Heriot Deane, and her destiny was still unravelled for her. I think it was a delight to her that she should thus be accompanying my lord, and she took no care to forecast or forestall the future. Yet indeed there was reason for some fore-

bodings, and those instant. The party travelled most of the day, desiring to put up at night, and to rest like other Christian folk. But towards evening they were still some miles from where they were disposed to settle, and it was after dusk when the coach entered the Forest, a little above Ringwood, which they avoided. The river Avon here runs among the swellings of a dark wood, and the road mounted sometimes, and again descended, undulating like the face of the sea. There was next a small post-house, showing no life, and when they had passed this some distance, Ryder rode back to the carriage with the intelligence of what they were no longer dreading. There was a troop of horse cantering down the road towards the carriage, and ere they should turn the corner it was necessary to make some plan of escape. The wood was impenetrable on either side for a carriage, and the post-house was too hazardous, seeing that the soldiers were likely to call there. But beyond the tavern was a cross-way which led south towards Christchurch, and this they decided forthwith to use. The horses' heads were at once turned, and within three minutes of the discovery, the coach was running towards the inn as fast as the animals could go.

There was scarce one hundred yards of distance between the fugitives and the house, when suddenly from the posting-yard, which gaped wide, issued a band of mounted soldiers, and held the road staring towards them. The appearance of haste, with the sight of Ravel lashing the horses, and the general air of alarm, was evident to these spectators, who barred the way with some merriment.

"Drive through them, rascal," cried my lord, putting his head out of the window. "Damn ye, drive 'em down."



But Ravel had insensibly, and even against his own purpose, pulled in, and at that instant the other troop came swinging into sight round the bend of the road.

“The game is up,” says Ryder with an oath. “There is a score at least.”

My lord made no answer, but compressed his lips together, watching the approach of the others. The two bodies mingled about the standing carriage.

“What is’t ye have here?” asked an officer.

The captain of the first body laughed. “Faith, I know not,” said he, “save that here is a damnably handsome madam, and that I have her not.”

“We may yet get off,” whispers Ryder. “They know nothing.”

My lord still answered nothing, regarding the two captains steadfastly.

“Why have ye stopped my carriage?” he asked in a quiet level voice.

“On suspicion of your hurry, my good sir,” laughed one of the officers. “But I have no doubt that you will soon convict us of over-zeal. I blame none that goes so fast with such an one beside him.”

“Who are you, sir?” asked the second man, coming close to the carriage, and striving to peer through the dusk into the window.

“I am a gentleman from Christchurch,” replied Chervell civilly; “pray make room for me and my lady, for we are already late.”

As he spoke, his face was thrust clearer into what light remained in the sky, and the Captain made an exclamation.

“I fear, my lord,” said he in another voice, “that ’tis not to Christchurch you will win to-night. I regret to incommode you, but you are my prisoner.”

At the news of this recognition Cherwell started, and rose in his seat.

“Nay, my lord,” protested the Captain, “you will have the wisdom to see with what folly you would resist. You would not imperil my lady by such rashness. I would for my part that I knew not your face, being acquainted with it in the Town; but we are under orders to take you, though we had not looked for you so far south.”

“You are undone, my lord; you are undone,” cried Ravel, who took this capture to heart exceedingly.

“Nay,” said my lord, not changing face or voice. “Not undone till London,” making a play upon the words, by which he signified that there was yet the journey to Town for his captors to achieve.

“Yet if I must surrender, there is no word of any other?” said he to the Captain.

The soldier hesitated. “I am to be excused,” said he simply, “but the words were ‘my lord Cherwell and whoso may be of his party.’”

My lord shrugged his shoulders. “They war still upon women,” he said. “’Tis that Judas.”

He gave up his weapon to the officer, but as he did so, Ryder turned his horse about, and put her nose to the bank upon one side of the road, where the wood was less dense. The brave beast, rocking and rearing, yet climbed to the top, and ere the soldiers had recovered their wits from the disturbance of this audacity, the mare shot with a crackling of sticks into the forest, and

disappeared in the dusk with a shout from the highwayman, and a dribbling stutter of muskets.

There was no pursuit of Ryder, for, indeed, it would have been useless in that rough forest, but the officer in command gave directions for a start, and the two troops, joining, both set out towards Lyndhurst. It was manifest that they had strict orders, and they were to conduct my lord to London. The Captain rode by the coach with two of his men, and apologized for the necessity he had. But my lord Cherwell was very affable, and conversed with him agreeably, hearing the news of Town, and comforting my lady now and then. Half the troop drew out in front, and half was behind ; and after the lapse of some miles, their distance from the coach increased with the coming of darkness. Presently the Captain rode to the front to give some instructions to his men, and there remained the two troopers, one upon either side of the carriage. The road was now passing under a great avenue of trees, which met above it and plunged the place in deeper blackness. My lord had settled back in his seat, for there was nothing to be seen, nor nothing heard save the roll of the wheels and the horses' hoofs on the ground. But presently he started up at a sound that caught his ears ; for out of the blackness on one side came a figure on horseback, monstrously swoln by the night, and struck with a soft thud upon the horse of the trooper near him. The man uttered an oath, but ere he could do more, the black figure had pinned him with its arms ; and simultaneously something was flung in by the window of the carriage and struck Cherwell's knee. In an instant his wits were alive ; he seized this, which was a piece of rope ; and, taking the situation with a leap of

his fancy, he opened the further door and sprang upon the second trooper, who was but now awakened to the signals of that struggle. The affair had been the passage of a moment; and the carriage still rolled on, with Ravel unwitting on the box, and the two troopers lying half-throttled upon the horses. Then Ravel, becoming aware of something that was passing, reined in, and Cherwell pulled his soldier out of the saddle.

“My lord,” says the voice of Ryder in a whisper, “have you him ready—is his mouth stopped?”

My lord said yes, pulling a knot in his rope, and Ryder whispered further, that there was a by-road in the darkness, and that they must take the horses.

“We will leave our mark, at least,” says Cherwell grimly, and they thrust in the two soldiers, trussed like fowls, helping my lady forth.

Then Ravel was bid to drive on, hear nothing, and to avoid suspicion while he might, and, seizing the horses, the two slipped away into the darkness, with my lady running lightly by them—and the escort not one hundred yards both in front and behind. They hit the by-way, and stood listening for a moment, but heard no pause of the cavalcade, which was now conducting no prisoners, indeed, but those two bound troopers. And so presently they mounted, with my lady as best she might clinging to her saddle, and went away into the night, making for Cadnam. They were not twenty miles now from Dulsiebridge, which, piercing the Forest by divers ways, they reached before midnight, and so came out in the moonlight before Heriot Deane.

## CHAPTER XX

HOW MY LADY FOLLOWED AFTER MY LORD, AND WHAT SHE FOUND

CHERWELL looked up the avenue of the park towards the house, and says he to his companion, "Stay ; it may be that there is a watch set here also ;" and with that he turned into the village and came before the Forest Inn. When he had rung at the bell loudly, there was presently a noise and the innkeeper appeared with a light, falling back in amazement to see him.

"Come ; no waste of time, goodman," said Cherwell amiably. "I have brought the Countess of Cherwell to her home, and here is a friend of mine that will drink her health."

He left my lady, who was very worn, below, and passed with Ryder into an upper room, whither wine was fetched. He questioned the man as to what had gone on since his absence, and learned that there was no one about the house.

"That is very well," he said, "but there may be, and, I doubt not, shall be, to-morrow."

There was a great quantity of wine drunk, as both were thirsty and tired ; and that upon poor stomachs had a harsh effect. My lord turned to Ryder—

"I know not your performances, sir," he said, "yet this I do know, that, whatever be your trade, you have a stout heart and a cunning wrist. I ask no better on my side than you."

Thereupon Ryder began to talk loudly, protesting what he and my lord could do together, and vowing he could fight fifty soldiers every day for his supper—which nonsense my lord laughed merrily. The truth is that one at least was soon grown to be over-full, which was the cause of their parting, and in this way.

Says my lord, who kept his head, but had grown more formal, that he lay under a great debt to Mr. Ryder, which he might not pay.

"Damn ye," says the highwayman, "what talk you? If any man should offer to pay me, my lord, that which I desire not to have, I would thread him with my bodkin."

"I offer you nothing," cried Cherwell sharply, "and you were best to be civil."

"Civil!" cries Ryder, laughing, "the devil take your civil!"

My lord threw aside his glass in anger, and he rose, casting a glance on his companion, who lolled tipsily in his chair.

"Mr. Ryder," he said curtly, "this is no place for one who has stood my friend. I offer you a chamber in my house."

"Sink me, I can look after myself," said Ryder noisily, and rapped hard for more wine.

"Ye will be drunken, fool," said my lord, who had himself taken quite enough.

"I will drink what I will," says Ryder, very surly.

My lord turned away. "You may go to the devil," said he, "I will go to my bed."

Ryder laughed in a coarse voice, crying out something about my lady, which set my lord aflame. He started alert, and his eyes shone, but then he dropped his hand, and shrugging his shoulders, went forth ; and that, by a strange freak of fortune, was the way in which he parted with the man who had so greatly befriended him.

Cherwell found my lady asleep, with her poor head upon the table, and carrying her in his arms so that she woke not, he laid her on the saddle before him, and so rode to his house.

He now made his preparations to resist a siege, for he was resolved at all costs not to be taken. Food was brought into Heriot Deane, and arms distributed among the servants, most of whom were very faithful to the Heriots. My lord swore passionately that no officer of the Crown should set foot across that threshold while he was alive to stay him. And indeed there was no attempt made to secure his person. How he had escaped, together with an account of his wanderings, came somehow to the King, who was mightily entertained. Some pressed for his arrest, but Charles refused.

“He has broke so many of my laws,” said he, “that I am inquisitive to see how many more he will break. I think he has earned his rest, and I doubt not that he will guard himself in Heriot Deane, as well as we shall guard him in the Tower. Besides,” he added, “he doth me no harm, nor wishes me any. Let James look to his own quarrels.”

But my lord knew nothing of this, and daily expected that he would be attacked. In a little, however, the fear of an immediate step passed away, and he began to move about more freely. He had not been in Dulsiebridge a

week when a letter came to him from the Lady Katharine Roodhouse. This I never saw, nor heard the contents, yet there fell into my hands some years ago my lord Cherwell's answer to it, from which it was evident what sense she had expressed.

*“Deare so kind,”* he wrote, *“I wou’d desire you to use that patience which I practice so long. Fear not but that I will remember and hold it in sweetness to do what was purposed. Nay, I will not have you speak so rudely of such a common tenderness. That which is laid down in cold terms shall be satisfy’d with urgency and ardour. I will exact what debt is due, and so shall ye, which shall be faithfully discharged before our conscience. Yet your debt will I make mine and steal that from you which I should render you ; so that you shall be tied two-fold and forced to compass your obligations as I chuse. So hard a bargain shall be driven, and such shall be your streights.*

*“Your faithful servant,*

*“CHERWELL.”*

It was shortly upon this letter that my lord departed one evening and rode to Town, where he arrived secretly, none being in his confidence. I know not what happened in this passage of his life, but it is most probable that the Lady Katharine remonstrated with him on his rashness. There were plenty of informers ready, and many that knew him, so that he could not lie hid long ; also, the Duke was moving for his attachment, having come to the belief that nothing which had occurred could rebound upon himself. The reason of this supposition is that the lady withdrew herself soon from London and lay at Farnham, where Cherwell



visited her afterwards at the "Bush." The Countess, meanwhile, had observed my lord's absence, and was greatly agitated for his safety. She supposed that he was gone to pursue his vengeance, and she desired only that he should rest and guard himself. She went about in a fear lest some danger to him should spring up at any moment, and she blamed herself for that he adventured so imprudently. Yet when he returned she said nothing, for he was never one to take counsel from others. It was only on the second occasion of his departure that her terrors broke through her reserve, and she begged him to have a care.

"If you should be captured there would be no more hope for you, my lord," she pleaded. "God has given you so deep a success that you have come through many troubles ; yet it is ill to adventure and dare misfortune."

"Why," said he, smiling, "whatever may befall me you are now protected. There is none now that will dare anything against you."

But she made an exclamation and turned her head away, keeping silent for a little ; then said she—

"What peril hung over me, that you have diverted, so that it is imminent on yourself. You have a double burthen of displeasure and enmity. See you not that it is for that cause I am concerned ? I owe you that security which you have lost, my lord ; and my conscience cries out that you must be diligently shielded."

My lord laughed. "Faith, these little hands shall shield me, an they will, Alethea," said he, and went forth, pleasantly tickled.

The Countess in all this was not happy, as indeed I had some opportunity to see. For about this time I paid

a visit to Heriot Deane, being disturbed about Cherwell's condition, and desirous to aid him, if that were possible. When I arrived my lord had been gone a day and a night, and there was no promise of his return. My lady was in deep distress, and, scarce waiting to bid me welcome, broke out with her news.

"Last night," said she, "there was a stranger in the village, and to-day there are come two troopers, who lodge at the inn. Sir Hilary, they are here to take my lord, and I know not whither he is gone. I fear for him," she cried aloud, "I fear for him, that he is contriving something against the Duke. He cannot rest; he goes about like an unpeaceful spirit, hatching dark designs. None is admitted to his confidence. He is merry and whistles. I think he walks upon the brink of a precipice."

I comforted her, though, to say truly, what she feared seemed to me most certain; but I promised that I would find my lord to give him warning of his danger. Yet a little afterwards when evening was come she might not rest, but walked abroad in the twilight, commoved by great agitation. When she came in she begged of me to say whither I would go, and how I should find my lord, and appeared in so much sorrow that I was fain to set out forthwith.

I sought Ravel (who was now returned to Dulside-bridge), thinking he might know his master's movements, but the fellow protested that he was ignorant. He was given to lie so naturally and readily that I paid little heed to this denial.

"Come, Ravel," I said, "there is some important information for my lord. He must receive it, or he is endangered. Whip up your memory."

But the rogue declared still that he knew nothing ; which may indeed have been true, though I never credited his denial, but rather supposed he was privy to many things, having access to them. This course failing, I was thrown back upon other inquiries, which took up many hours. Indeed, there was nothing done that night, which my Lady Cherwell passed out of bed and restless. We waited, expecting and fearing at any turn to hear of my lord's return, or in an anxiety lest he should be already in the hands of the troopers in the village. The next day other soldiers arrived, and took up their quarters in the inn, which increased the Countess's alarm. But now by diligent questioning I found one that had seen my lord ride on the Winchester road, and, that discovered, nothing would serve my lady but she and I must venture forth privily to seek Cherwell and warn him to fly. Though the clue was but little, I yielded to this ardour, and, leaving the house secretly, towards nightfall, we drove to Winchester. It would be of no interest to set down all the inquiries and searchings of that pursuit. It is sufficient to say that at Winchester I learned that my lord had gone towards Alton, and, once upon that highway, he was the easier to trace. This quest thus brought us late at night into Farnham, where the coach drew up at the "Bush." Here, being entered, I made more inquiries, expecting to hear that my lord had lain there and gone forward to London ; but, to my surprise, such an one as I described was said by the footboy to be there still, though his name was not known.

Back went I to my lady with this good news, and she cried out, her eyes sparkling, "We shall save him, Sir Hilary. Was I not right?"

“You were right, cousin,” said I, for I could not have guessed what was to come.

She dropped her hands like any child, and suddenly broke off, and seizing my arm in a terror pointed at the courtyard, where there was a lean swarthy shadow, that slunk away at her cry.

“’Tis that man !” she whispered, pressing against me, as though she would hide. “He haunts me ever, like some evil spirit, before some misfortune.”

“What man ?” I asked.

“Fargus,” she said. “Who hath twice attempted my lord’s life and my honour. He is a devil.”

This intelligence was alarming, for it seemed as if Cherwell was watched and threatened, whithersoever he went ; and it might be that we were too late, and that this villain had already brought the soldiery upon him. There was, therefore, the more need for haste, and I requested the servant to acquaint my lord with our presence, and that we were urgent to see him. He stared on my lady and me with some suspicion, but presently declared that he would do as I desired ; and we were conducted into an empty room, and sate down to wait. Now this chamber faced the courtyard, which was surrounded upon the four sides with a balcony on the first floor. The hour was nigh to midnight, but there was yet some light in the sky, through a quarter-moon and stars that hung there. We had stayed there for some time, hearing of no one, when suddenly my lady again cried out, and protested that she saw this Fargus enter the inn from the courtyard.

“He will slay my lord,” she said piteously. “He is gone to assassinate my lord.”

“Nay,” said I, “but if that be so we are at least in time to stop that,” and I led the way out of the room towards a staircase that ascended to the floor above.

This I did the more readily as I had conceived the notion that the servant had not kept faith with us, and that we might remain where we sate till doomsday for him. As we reached the stair there was the noise of feet passing up, which I had not looked for, being disposed to think my lady’s imagination had grown too quick. There was some one moving on the floor above for certain ; and up we followed as silently as we might.

The light in the gallery above was very faint, but it was possible to make out a shambling figure that walked and vanished into the darkness.

“We must follow,” cried my lady in a flutter, and at that we hastened our steps.

As we turned a corner there came to us now the sound of voices, and one raised clear and strong, at which my lady called out that it was my lord, her husband.

I tried the handle of a door near by, and it gave upon a large panelled room towards the bowling-green. But there was no one here, only the sound of voices nearer and louder. Beyond was a second chamber, to which I strode and pushed at the door.

“Oh, haste, haste !” pleaded the Countess, who was shaken at the sight of that man.

I twisted the handle and put my shoulder to the door, which came open with a little report of sound, and the next instant we were in the chamber beyond.

## CHAPTER XXI

### A RELATION OF WHAT HAPPENED IN THE INN AT FARNHAM

MY lady Cherwell, moving swiftly in her perturbation, had entered before me, and now stopped suddenly with a little gasp of breathlessness, putting out a hand without consciousness of her own act, as though she would have stayed herself on me. And, indeed, what my eyes at once lighted on served to explain for me this bewildered pause. For the room, which was small and snug, was brightly lit, and in one corner upon a low chair sate my lord himself, while in the centre of the room stood she that was the Lady Katharine Roodhouse.

She was dressed in a very caressing robe that flowed to the ground softly, and her eyes were bright and full. Indeed I have rarely seen as handsome a figure as she made in that excitement which burned in her, and set her mild eyes shining. But she made no sign on our interruption, merely turning her head and regarding us both, but more particularly my lady Cherwell, with a look of surprise and interrogation. It was my lord who first spoke. He rose from where he sate, and came forward, not at all discomposed, but very quiet and cold.

“Madam,” said he to his lady, “it is strange that you have wandered so far. I left you at Dulsiebridge, and these are late hours to be abroad on perilous roads.”

“My lord,” she answered, looking on him with some emotion, and not at all at the woman, “I am here to warn you. It is my fault that we are come ; I am with your cousin, to tell you of a danger that awaits you.”

She spoke with difficulty, but he asked her, not heeding this—

“What is this ?”

“It is some soldiers that have taken up their place at Dulsiebridge,” she said in the same voice, which sounded in my ears like the low melody of a bell, rung slowly. “They tarry for you ; they are set there against your return ; and they will take you, doubtless, to the Tower again.”

My lord frowned, and then with a little laugh— “Why, it appears I had better not go home, then,” he said.

My lady said nothing, but my lord frowning again, turned to me. “What do you here, cousin ?” he asked, with some impatience in his voice. “You are not prudent to suffer my lady to wander forth like this. You should be better advised.”

“The Earl of Cherwell,” I answered sharply, for I was nettled at his tone, “is scarce a judge of prudence, as this scene should prove.”

“Now, by God, Hilary,” he cried fiercely, “you pass beyond the proper bounds. I will have you know where they are set for you,” and he made an angry step towards me.

But the Countess came between softly. “Sir Hilary

is here because I fetched him," she said quickly. "He holds no responsibility. The blame is mine, and mine what imprudence you attribute to this act. My lord, you have the warning; your safety is in peril. I have said what was needful, and I will now be gone."

She turned away as she spoke, never yet casting a glance at that other woman, who observed her in silence, with even less discomposure than my lord. But he called out—

"Stay! Whither do you go!"

"I go to Heriot Deane," she answered. "Sir Hilary will see me safe."

"You cannot ride to-night," he said in amazement. "'Tis past midnight. You must lie here till the morrow."

"Nay," she replied, flushing, and with a small outbreak of her voice. "Nay, nay, I must be gone."

My lord took a step yet closer to her and seized her hand. "You must not go," he said gently. "You have come hither on a kindly errand to serve me, and I should be an ingrate to let you so depart. I will not have you to go. You shall lie here, and it is I who will be gone."

But at this she started, and of a sudden the thought of Fergus coming to her mind, she cried in another voice, no longer even and still, but broken with feeling—"Oh, my lord, you must not go forth. You are watched. There are those that spy upon you to take your life. I have seen that black shadow of the murderer. He is within this house, and maybe he waits even now to strike at your heart."

My lord laughed softly. "Pooh!" says he. "I am



afraid of no Master Cut-throat. Have no fears for me. There is none can slay me till my hour is come."

She dropped her voice to a frightened murmur, gazing on him wildly. "What," she said, "what if that hour be come, my lord! Oh, what if it be come!" She turned, and for the first time let her glance fall on Lady Katharine. "Come," she said, with a little sob, "ye are plotting I know not what. My lord has designs of a grave import. Madam, I beseech you to plead with him not to carry them out. I ask not for your secrets, my lord. No doubt there is a very solemn purpose in this meeting. My lord is involved in affairs of State; it was ever so, as I have heard. He may not keep his fingers from them; they itch and tickle to be there, meddling. But, madam, consider with what terrible issues these are fraught. When he should be at home, lying close, or abroad, flying from those wicked men, here is he seated conferring on these high intrigues of State, obnoxious to all his enemies, and with one cold villain knocking on the door. Oh, madam, I beseech you to save him from himself. Have pity upon him, and despatch him into safety. What great undertakings you conspire with him, and whatsoever matters you would move—let them rest and wait over until the time is more auspicious. He hath but one life, madam," she cried, falling on her knees, "he hath but the one life, and that is precious to him, more precious than he knows, but how precious you perchance may guess, since I who entreat you thus have done so."

My lord stared down at her, as I observed, with a look of perplexity upon his face. He watched her with his quick eyes, saying no word, but he moistened his lips.

There was a little smile on the Lady Katharine's face, and she held out her hand. "I beg ye will rise, madam," she said in her soft lisp. "Ye speak so eloquently as to persuade me. I have no influence in my lord's mind, but I will secure his safety. That I promise you. He shall be in no danger to conspire with me. Lard, 'tis a very innocent sort of conspiracy. Yet, my lord," said she, turning to him, "get ye gone from my sight. Or rather, if there is one that waits you without I will be gone from yours. There shall be no dead corse upon my innocence, my lady, I promise you. You may carry away your lord and hide him well. In some deep cellar, my lord, you shall lie in safety until this bitterness be over-past."

She laughed pleasantly, and, as I thought, with a little malice; but my lord stared at her without seeming to see her, and thence back to his wife. The little wanton laughter of the Lady Katharine did not touch him. There was no littleness of vanity or of any feeling in this man, for all his arrogant properties. He cared not if he was so thrust out to ridicule. But he put out his hand, and lifted my lady from the floor where she knelt. The Lady Katharine stood face to face with her for one moment ere she turned, and their eyes encountered, those of the woman and those of the child, who was yet a woman. They stood of a height, but my lady Cherwell was slim and slender beside that fine fulness. The features of her face spoke with the lines and tears of her emotion, yet such a glory shone from it as made her extreme beauty quick and startling. Then the Lady Katharine turned, and went out slowly with a light laugh.

My lord still held his wife's hand, and I think he knew it not. He pressed it gently. "You have ridden far, madam," he said softly. "You are tired, and must eat and drink."

"Nay, I want nought," she answered, and withdrew her hand gently.

"I thank you for your great kindness," he continued, observing her who would not meet his gaze. "It is out of a very tender pity that you have compassed this trouble for me. I would not have you ignorant, madam, how deep an obligation I am placed in, nor at what I prize this service."

"Nay," she said again in a low voice. "Nay, I but render to you a little of that which you have given me."

She wore a look of weariness upon her face, and she seemed not to know what to do, or whither to go. All that feeling she had expressed from her countenance was fled, leaving her white and cold and grievously dispirited. My lord was silent a moment.

"You must rest, madam," he said at last. "A room shall be prepared for you; and we will ride home to-morrow."

"You must go abroad," she answered dully. "There may be no home for you, my lord."

"By God!" he cried, "I fear not. I will run no longer. There shall none find me flying, but I shall be brought to bay."

"My lord," she said sadly, "you talk rashly. There is nothing can save you if you return to Dulsiebridge. Ye are foolish."

"I am Anthony Heriot," said my lord with a laugh. "We are used to die fighting."

She turned to him on an impulse. "And it is I that have brought you to this!" she cried. "I foretold that so it would be. You were doomed to ruin, my lord, when you joined your lot with my unhappy fortunes. But there is still time. Fly abroad and redeem your destiny. There are those that will welcome you at the Hague. Ye would be fortunate there. Nay, if it so please you, take with you that which you will, my lord, seeing I desire only that you be safe and happy."

"You speak warmly," said Cherwell. "I fear you take my peril too hardly. Yet your solicitude moves me. You are generous."

At that, and quite unexpectedly, she broke out—"I am not generous," she cried, "but only a very selfish woman. See, my lord, I will confess to you. I know not on how many tides of feeling a poor girl's heart may travel. Yet it is true; a little ago when I spoke, 'twas for myself—God pardon me!—that I pleaded. I begged you to cease, my lord, from what purpose you had, and from this enterprise you are engaged in. Nay, I know nothing clearly, but this is certain, that I pleaded for myself when I was praying for your safety. I would have you safe, but how much of that heat which I showed sprang from another and a baser feeling! I cannot tell. There are in any human heart, my lord, passions that we know not. They shall be measured for us some day, and we shall be requited for them. My spirit has sinned, but I cannot repent of that sin. Nay," she cried, her face flushing in her eagerness, "I do not; I boast my sin. There is pride of the heart and there is vanity, and these are mine; but there is something else below them all—I know not how it should lie there, nor what it feeds on,

but it moves mightily and I am shaken with it. See these poor hands that I hold out to you, I that am your wife,—they tremble and are afraid, but not with fear, my lord. I have a fire in my bosom that burneth out all fear. Behold, I know not what I say to you; I am carried by this so galloping a madness beyond that which becomes me.”

“Why, what is this?” cried my lord, interrupting in amazement and staring at her glowing face.

“Let me go on,” she said swiftly, with a gesture of her hand. “’Tis the last, maybe, I shall speak with you, my lord. I grudge not what you have earned. Surely, you shall have the authority over your body, to do that which you will. I was wrong, but consider how I was misled by my undisciplined fancies. But now I give you back your vow, and that lady hers. The promise that I wrung from her with tears on the plea of your safety shall not be holy, seeing that it was in part to spare my poor heart. It is better, my lord, that you should go abroad, but let there be no embargo on your liberty. Chuse where you will, and what you list.”

My lord, seeing his wife so moved, was himself struck with agitation; he came closer, touching her on the arm. “What is’t ye bid me do?” he asked softly.

She shook her head. “I bid you nothing,” she answered more quietly. “I release you from such poor obligations as were laid on you. You took them generously upon yourself, my lord, and they shall not constrain you longer. All save these bonds shall be dissolved, and, alack, they may not. Yet,” she went on with a new outburst, “the fault lies at your door, my lord. I warned ye to refrain. I showed with what ye were threatened. You were

proud in your powers and laughed, and in saving me undertook your own ruin. As God lives, my lord, the fault is yours. These blind words embarrass you, doubtless, but I speak as one that parts for ever and goes down a long and distant road. Let there be nothing false now between us, between you who have preserved my honour from the persecutors, and me that surrender you to those to whom ye are owed. Go forthright hence, and visit her, whoe'er she be, and tell her that I have no claims. I am just now where I was ungenerous before. I lay down my rights that are your generous gift, and she who will may take them up, my lord. I am a poor maid, but I have been thy wife, a maid that is wife, and a wife still that is maid. What I have been, that do I remain, and what I am, that was I always. I will encumber you no more. I step forth from your life, my lord. May it be prosperous and happy !”

Trembling with her agitation, yet keeping a pale still face, and with a great dignity, she ceased, and for a moment met my lord's eyes. His glance fell, and he moved away towards the window.

“God pardon me, you say truly. God pardon me !” he said, and was silent, looking out into the blackness. What would have passed then I know not, for they seemed to have forgot that I was there ; but at that instant the door opened and the Lady Katharine returned, holding something in her hand.

“I beg you will forgive me for this trespass,” said she, and her voice rang with some exultation. “I know not indeed on what I trespass, but I have some good news, my lord, which my lady should be glad to learn.”

He turned to her inquiringly, as did we all.

“You may go to your home,” says she mockingly, “and take my lady Cherwell without scruple. There is no danger to you. I have here a message.” She hesitated, glancing from the paper she held towards the Earl. Then she put it in his hands. My lord let his eyes fall on it.

“Whence comes this?” he asked presently.

“A messenger from his Highness,” she answered eagerly, and flashed him a look. “Madam,” she said to the Countess, “you need be in no fear. My lord is safe, so he shall accept what conditions his Highness has granted.”

“They are granted unto you?” said Cherwell slowly.

“’Tis brought me this instant,” she said, smiling.

“By the man, Fergus?” I said, as a sudden guess.

She shrugged her shoulders. “I know no names. It is my desire and that of all his friends to secure my lord.”

My lord took the letter and tore it deliberately across, throwing the fragments in the fire.

“I do believe,” said he slowly, “that were I to make terms with his Highness I should lie justly under the condemnation of God and all good men.”

“My lord, you are mad,” cried Lady Katharine, and would have snatched the pieces from the fire, but the smoke broke into flame and consumed them. “You are mad,” she repeated, displaying some anxiety. “This was your security. This was what my lady Cherwell asked of me.”

“You have destroyed your freedom?” cried the Countess pitifully.

He looked at her. “I have yet to learn that my life is not my own to do what I desire with,” he said. “I

will make no peace with the Duke. He is gone too far and offended too deeply."

Lady Katharine shrugged her shoulders.

"Go," said my lord to his wife, "settle yourself to rest here this night ; and we will ride back to-morrow."

She seemed as if she would open her mouth to protest, but her eyes caught his, and she was silent.

"Cousin," said he to me, "I charge you to attend my lady's comfort. See her so disposed that she may sleep in peace, after what refreshment is needed. I have work to do. Go, child," said he, "rest in quiet and assurance."

My lady passed from the room in silence, with a wondering look upon her face, and I followed after her.

It seems that when we were gone Lady Katharine Roodhouse turned to him, and says she again—

"This is madness. What means this madness ? I had assured your safety. With great pains I purchased it from his Highness. Yet there is time still, my lord. You must fly abroad. Be not so foolish as to continue in this war with the Duke who shall be King."

"No," said he quietly ; "I fear I may not satisfy you, madam. I have suffered too grievously at his Highness's hands."

"Oh!" she cried, throwing up her arms in impatience, "you have a devil. I believe he domineers you ; and I waste my time upon you. What hinders you to go abroad, and after to make your resignation ?"

He answered nothing, but said, "What noise is that ?" for at that moment there arose the sound of wheels from the courtyard, and many voices, with the clatter of horses' hoofs.



“Oh, 'tis some one that has arrived late,” she said, and looked forth.

Then she pulled-to the curtains sharply and approached my lord. “I would urge upon you to fly,” she said earnestly, laying a hand upon his arm. “Believe me that 'tis necessary you should take this course.”

“I will not fly,” says he, shaking off her hand gently ; “I have work that I must do.”

He stood looking before him at the fire, and the Lady Katharine watched him in silence for some minutes. Then she shrugged her fine shoulders once again and went swiftly forth.

## CHAPTER XXII

### HOW MY LORD MET THE DUKE FACE TO FACE

My lord sate before the fire for the space of one hour, sunk in meditation, until the embers fell black, and he awoke to find the chamber cold. Then he rose up and went into the corridor. It was quite dark, save for the swinging lanthorn, but as he stood there he was aware of feet that drew up the stair and came slowly by. There was one that passed him in the shadows quietly, and in that low light my lord turned his head and watched, and it seemed to him that the figure and the gait were familiar. Next in a flash he knew it. 'Twas the Duke himself.

My lord marvelled to see him there, not knowing that his Highness had driven from Portsmouth, and was now upon the way to Windsor. Yet he recalled the noises in the courtyard that witnessed to the arrival of some person of note, and pondered on so strange a coincidence. If so be the Duke learned he was in the inn, it might indeed be to his undoing, for he would be taken by the guard. Cherwell stood thinking a little, and then he swiftly pursued the figure along the gallery. Presently the Duke reached a door, which he opened and disappeared within ;

which set my lord considering again. He went back to his room, and stared at the black ashes ; but presently issued forth once more, and returning along the corridor, moved the handle and opened the door through which he had seen his Highness vanish.

He perceived at once that he had come into a large bed-chamber, in which a light was burning, and the first thing was that his eyes fell on the Duke, who stood in the middle of the room alone. There was a frown upon the Duke's face, but when he looked up and saw my lord Cherwell, a quick change spread there, and from being annoyed or impatient, as he had appeared, he showed a startled countenance, in which his eyes moved restlessly. It was my lord that spoke first—

“I am not come to assassinate your Highness,” said he with a sneer, “but indeed I think that there is something between us that we must settle. I have been held by other matters of business from an interview with your Highness ; but now the time has come, when all things may be settled.”

“What is it you ask, my lord ?” inquired the Duke, in somewhat troubled tones.

“Why,” says Cherwell, “here is an opportunity to discuss with your Highness in your Highness's room certain affairs to which we both are privy.”

There was a change again in the Duke's face, as he heard this, and he drew in a little breath, as if he had been relieved.

“The time is ill considered and ill chosen, my lord,” said he sharply ; “I am weary and would rest.”

“I would not stand betwixt your Highness and his rest,” said my lord, with a bow. “Nay, but perhaps

your Highness will sleep the sounder for what passes between us."

The Duke cast on him a doubtful glance, as if wondering what these sinister words might portend. My lord was very cool, and very swift in his speech. He hesitated not.

"My lord, I will speak with you on a more convenient season," said the Duke impatiently. "I beg you to be gone."

For answer my lord turned the key in the lock.

"There is none that may now interrupt us," he said simply.

"This is an outrage, my lord," said James angrily. "I bid you stand aside and suffer me to pass. You forget what is due between us."

"'Tis because I remember very well that I act so," answered Cherwell. "You shall hear me, and what I purpose, by your Highness's favour."

"Well?" said the Duke, considering, I suppose, that it were better to humour this madman.

"Sir," said my lord gravely, "there is a matter of some account between us, you that shall be King of this realm and me that shall be your liege. I think that in this room there need be no pretences. Let your Highness feign nothing, for I am here to speak and hear the truth, and I will endure no feints. I speak as a man and not as one that inhabits Courts, and nothing shall withstand my sincerity. God knows with what purpose in your cruel heart you have this long time persecuted an innocent lady. You have a libidinous soul, your Highness, and I warn you that it stinketh. What was it ye pestered? Why, a poor child that was betrayed of her friends and was

beggared of all but her virtue. Her did I defend, and in defending have offended against his Majesty's brother and your Grace's Highness. That would I do again and yet again—yea, though it were a thousand princes. What ye have done, ye know well, better than I, even to the imprisonment of her who is my wife, driven to that refuge by your persecutions."

"My lord," said the Duke coldly, "you are mistook. I listen to your extravagant accusations as to those of one insane. I know nothing of this imprisonment."

"You lie," cried my lord sharply, his face lowering. "You are responsible for your creatures who now lie dead and rotten, as you yourself perchance shall lie. I am here not to mingle you flattery as courtiers do, but to undress for you your naked soul and shame you for what you are—a whited sepulchre. Base and cruel is your race, and base and cruel is your Highness. Think you that I forget how you have ruined this child's life and mine with it? You have deemed yourself supreme, and able to purchase any woman's honour and any man's spirit. You have learned you are wrong, and how wrong you shall yet learn. For I am not done with your Highness."

His voice rose with his growing anger, but the Duke, troubled by this exhibition, made an exclamation.

"My lord, I am weary of this wildness. Let me pass," he said.

"Now, by Heaven, you shall not go from this room till I chuse," he cried in a fury, "and whether ye go forth feet foremost I shall yet determine."

"My lord," cried the Duke, his face blanching a little at this terrible menace.

"Ye have put a mock on me, and would have fastened

shame there," he cried, beside himself. "Ye would have stained a woman's soul with your pollution. For these any man should die. I ask you, why should you not also, James Stewart, die where you stand?"

"Stand aside," cried the Duke, with a trembling lip, but in a commanding voice.

My lord drew his sword, his eyes flashing. "We shall see fair play together," he cried, with a harsh laugh.

"You may not draw on me, my lord," remonstrated the Duke, in anger and alarm. "Madman, put that down."

"I would draw on the devil, and that is you," said my lord, between his teeth, and he made a step towards the Duke. His Highness stepped back with a cry of dismay, and put his hand towards his scabbard; but he got no further than this act.

Suddenly there was a sound in the chamber as of a door opening, and simultaneous with that of a frightened cry; and the next moment the door into the inner room was thrust aside, and there stood my lady Cherwell on the threshold, clad in her night-robe, her face drawn with terror and agitation.

My lord let his point fall, staring at her in bewilderment, and still reeking with the fumes of his anger.

"What do you here?" he asked harshly, and his thoughts began to ply about the situation after his swift habit. My lady said nought, parting her lips, but being too deeply moved to speak.

"This is your room, madam!" said my lord slowly, as the sense of what had happened came to him.

Still she made no sign, only standing there with a piteous face.

“It seems that I have wronged your Highness,” he said, still slowly eyeing the woman, “and that you must die upon another pretext.”

“The lady is innocent,” said the Duke quietly.

“Nay, you are a judge of innocence,” said Cherwell, with a sneer, passing his blade through his fingers with a savage restless movement.

My lady ran forward and cast herself at his feet. “Oh, my lord, my lord,” she sobbed. “You are cruel, how cruel you are !”

“What is it ?” he asked, beginning to wonder at this puzzle.

“Think you so lightly of that honour which I have so long defended, my lord, and you, my lord ?” she sobbed. “Could you suppose that which has been so distressfully preserved should be so wantonly cast away ?”

A comprehension was now dawning on Cherwell. “Then is he here in this chamber against your will ?” he asked.

She bowed her head. “I know not whence his Highness came from,” she murmured, hiding her face.

“Asperse not the lady,” said the Duke, breaking in, and speaking with some dignity. “She was not privy to my coming here, and most unwilling.”

“Ah !” says Cherwell, looking on him afresh. “Althea, I crave your pardon for my thought, which was of the moment’s heat. ’Twas yonder then you fled for refuge. But fear not. This Satyr shall perish.”

She rose clinging to him. “No, no,” she sobbed. “Let us go hence. Let us depart. It would be to destroy yourself.”

He disengaged himself with a swift act and dashed his

scabbard to the floor. "Now, by God," he said again, "he is doubly damned, and doubly shall he die," and he threw out his rapier towards the Duke furiously.

But my lady, being now gotten upon her feet, stood for an instant, wildly gazing, and then, stooping, she picked up a dagger that had dropped in my lord's movement.

"Whether you be slain or whether you live, you die equally, my lord," she cried; "I am a sword among ye to bring strife. This poor body is not worthy. Ye shall not die for me," and ere either was aware she had plunged the dagger which she held into her bosom.

The Duke uttered a cry of horror, but my lord sprang forward, and snatched at her hand, seizing the wrist as the point struck her delicate flesh. The force of that blow which had been delivered in the pitch of her high passion was great, yet this act arrested it. The shining edge tore through the robes she wore and opened the white breast, so that she fell down, the blood streaming from her side, and lay heaped in a swound upon the floor.

My lord dropped beside her body, and with his kerchief stanchd the blood, kissing her on the lips. Then he left her there unconscious, and stood up, facing the Duke.

"Guard!" he said in a low voice, "guard! or I will slice your rottenness in pieces."

He made at the Duke so furiously that he was forced to give way, and, reading death in my lord's eyes, drew his sword and made play. His Highness was no coward and no mean swordsman, yet this contest must have irked his temper and his courage. The circumstances of the fight, and that black passion of his adversary, moved him



to apprehension. He retired on the defence, and drew to the wall, and it seemed likely that yet one more should fall in that fatal struggle about one poor child, and he the chiefest of all, and one whose ending should make such a noise as would set the world in a consternation.

Cherwell pressed his Highness hard, ignoring much of skill, but instant only to butcher the man he hated on the spot. His lady lay dead, as he supposed, and he himself was possessed with a thousand furies that cried eloquently for vengeance. It is vain to ask what fears and what feelings animated his Highness then. There was none who could read at any time that cold secretive face. Yet there can be no question that he fought with a growing horror, and an increasing despair that he could escape this mad enemy. Perhaps too he spared even then a thought for the young virgin body that lay there stretched in her blood, and repented of that which had brought her to this evil. The fiend that was in Cherwell leaped out in his onset, and the Duke went back against the wall; but in the nick of that perilous moment there was a great noise at the door, and, cloven asunder, it fell in pieces, admitting a gentleman with some soldiers, who, taking in the scene, rushed upon my lord.

But he heard and saw nothing, until his sword was wrested from his fingers and he was in the hands of several captors. For a while he struggled blindly, and then was still, looking towards the Duke. James was holding his arm where my lord's point had taken him, and breathing very hardly.

“Your Highness! Your Highness!” cried the gentleman who had entered, in dismay and wonder, gazing at the scene, and at the Countess's body.

The Duke came to himself. "Get him away," says he. "He is mad; get him away, Sir Ralph."

"He shall be secured, fear not, your Highness," said the gentleman, to whom my lord was unknown.

"How came you hither?" asked his Highness.

"We were awoke by an alarm," said the officer. "'Twas a lady spread a rumour of your danger, directing us hither."

The Duke was silent, and he moved towards the door. "Come," he said; "leave your prisoner and conduct me hence."

"But, your Highness——" began the astonished man.

"Cross me not, cross me not," said the Duke impatiently. "Have you not my orders? You are to leave this gentleman to himself," and his eyes fell upon my lady's body, "and have assistance fetched to this poor lady," he added, as coolly as he might.

He went by, avoiding the sight of my lord's eyes which followed him, and his escort tramped after him, leaving my lord alone in the room with his wife. He stooped and placed a hand upon her bosom, where the heart still throbbed. Then he lifted her as she was in his arms, and striding across the chamber laid her on the bed, sitting down by her side.

## CHAPTER XXIII

WHAT MY LORD SAID TO THE KING, AND WHAT  
ENSUED

OF these things which had happened during that remarkable night I knew nought, but slept undisturbed till the morning. Then a rumour reached me of something strange, and I hastened to my lady's room, where I was told my lord was. There I found him as he had sate through the night by the bedside, watching his wife, who lay sleeping like unto death. Yet she was not greatly wounded with her act, but rather worn by the long strain upon her life, and broken in spirit. She had been prudently tended, and had taken a draught of physick under which she slept. But my lord still kept watch.

He looked up when I entered, and gave me good-morning. "The Duke is gone," said he.

"What Duke?" I asked, for I had heard nothing, and thought he wandered.

"His Highness is departed," he said, and rose. "Will you do me a kindness, cousin?" he asked. "Watch here while I return."

He went forth, leaving me amazed by all this, and when he returned he sate down again quietly.

“There is none left of that transaction,” he said. “Man and woman—all are fled. And so we close the book,” and he put out a hand and stroked my lady’s white arm very gently. But she stirred under the clothes, and opened her eyes, which fell on him in a little wonder, doubting and troubled.

“Sweetheart,” says he, “ye are better. Ye have slept well. I bid ye mend, for we have a journey to our home.”

There was some brightness sprang up out of her face on that instant, and the bewildered look wavered and broke; but I turned away and came forth of the room into the courtyard, where the sun was shining joyously.

My lord and his wife remained three days at Farnham, meeting no interruption and experiencing no interference. What I have set forth concerning the events of that night I gathered in that time from my lord himself partly, but partly from Sir Ralph Morris subsequently. ’Twas clear that the Duke would have been slain, and my lord a ruined man, had it not been for the arrival of the soldiers; and there is no doubt but ’twas Lady Katharine Roodhouse who raised the alarm in the hope to hinder so terrible a calamity. How far she was privy to the Duke’s design I cannot guess, but being what she was, of an indolent and voluptuous nature, with pretty affectations and a tolerant good-humour, it is possible she may have been acquainted with his purpose, nay, have inspired it. ’Tis not profitable after this long lapse of time to wonder upon what can never be discovered. It is enough that the Duke left Farnham without taking any steps against Cherwell, and that this was the signal for the Lady

Katharine's departure also. No doubt that she was frightened by what this intrigue had issued in.

But though there was yet silence on the Duke's part, who cannot have desired to stir up this unpleasant scandal, my lord was not safe. He was too deeply committed in other ways, and he might not move abroad without fear of arrest. He himself was sufficiently careless as ever, but I prevailed upon him that I should ride to London and there use such means and influence as I could in his favour. He had somewhat of a change in his posture, and was brought to see that he would be profited if the King should pardon his extravagances. So that I rode to Town the same day on which my lady, who was better of her wound, accompanied my lord to Heriot Deane. The soldiers were gone from the village, leaving but one stranger, whom my lord judged to be keeping him in charge. And no doubt this was so. Yet it prevailed nothing upon Cherwell's new temper. My lady mended quickly, and the month was May, with springing of flowers and singing of birds in the woods.

'Twas early in June, the Duke having as yet made no sign, that my lord resolved, mainly upon consideration of his wife, to make an attempt at pacification—not with his Highness, whom he vowed always he would, in his rough words, “spew out of his mouth,” but with his Majesty, for whom he had a fondness. Thus he would join me in London and add to mine his efforts for a conciliation. I had found his enemies were many and sore, for he was never used to spare his words or his opinions on them. Moreover there were people who considered him a firebrand, and a dangerous man, and would be glad to see him disposed of, for they said they

could be sure of nothing whilst he intermeddled. But now my lord would advocate his own cause, and that before the King, which brought him to Town in very high spirits.

My lady Cherwell had so far contested his resolution, pleading always that they should go to Holland or elsewhere and live immune. Yet when she saw him determined to stake all upon the one hazard, she said no more, only praying him that he would diligently guard his safety.

“I go,” said he, “to set that right which is wrong and must be straightened.”

“Ye go freely upon this journey and without discouragement?” she asked.

“I am discouraged by this absence,” he replied, smiling, “but I have a great reward in promise for thee and thine, which is mine also.”

She turned, as I fancy, of a faint redness, speaking in those soft and trembling tones.

“God deliver thee rightly, my lord, as ye have delivered me.”

“And as thou shalt be delivered,” says he quickly, referring to that which was now known to him.

These were the last words between them ere he set forth, leaving her among the formal hedges of the Italian garden.

He reached Town on the sixth of June, and took up his quarters with me at the “Boar” tavern, where I was wont to lie. Unhappily I had little of advantage to report to him, but he was quite content, nodding his head, and saying with a laugh that he would set all right, and that if Charles should not consent he would yet lead a more dangerous rebellion than that of Taunton. But he

lay close till the following day, and saw none, inscribing a letter to my lady Cherwell, which was as follows—

“*My very deare Harte,*

“*I laye last night with my cozen in this house, hearing what he did and how he has contrived his time. For which I am greatly indebted to him, and I do expect that what we shall both accomplish will be towards my deliv’rance and your ease. I shall endeavour to see the King to-day, which done, I will send you word. There is a great heat in this Town which is rained from bright and shining skies every day, so that ladies are determined (so they say) to go about as naked as they may dare. Ravel (the rogue) being fool enough to celebrate his visiting of London by a drunken orgy, was drawn last night into a noisy brawl, and so, falling among some desperate characters, was carried, with empty pockets, and fouled with dirt, into the fields, where he slept till morning. The villain returned to-day very sheeplike and humble, and groaning with aches in all his body. It is said that my lady Bellamy is dismissed the Court, having pushed herself too far, and that Sir John Richardson had some hand in this. She was handsome enough when I remember her, but of an ugly spirit. The King’s health is better, for the which I am glad for many reasons. I would desire to walk in those meadows about the river in your company this day, and to heare once again the quire of singing birds in the elms, a great assemblage of musick. These streets have no passion in them, but only a mocking echo and an ugly semblance; and the taynte and distortion of such graces as become and adorn your loveliness. Adieu, my deare lady. Ye have that which I desire in you, and what you desire I shall accomplish shortly.*

“*Your affectionate and faithful husband,*

“*CHERWELL.*”

Through the offices of Lord Hammond, who was friendly to him, Lord Cherwell put his request before the King, who appointed the next evening to see him in his private rooms in Whitehall, saying to Hammond that he dared not be under the reproach of flying an enemy. This Hammond carried to Cherwell, who laughed a little bitterly and said—

“Maybe it would be wiser in them to catch me here, lest I conceal some weapon about me.”

Yet the King, although he gave this meeting, received my lord with great coldness and satire.

“I know not what brings you hither, my lord,” he said, “unless it be to gloat upon the ruin you have wrought.”

“Your Majesty——” said Cherwell in surprise.

“Nay, I knew not that I was still so privileged as to hold that title,” continued the King. “I should thank you for that mercy.”

My lord flushed. “I am here to beg a favour of your Majesty,” he said.

The King raised his eyebrows. “Ah!” he said, “I am clearly bigger than I thought. I shall soon pinch myself to see if I am wholly come together; my lord Cherwell, you reassure me.”

My lord answered nothing, but waited, and presently the King said—

“What is this favour which I still seem to have the privilege of rendering to a rebel against me?”

“Sire,” said my lord, “I desire and crave of you pardon, and to live peaceably.”

“It would be excellent news if you should live peaceably,” said the King, “though news too good to carry



weight. But pardon I know not. It is not of me that you should ask pardon, but go on your knees to the law. Faith, my lord, they set the King a little lower than the law in these days."

"Sire," said Cherwell, "'tis unprofitable to dig up what is buried lest it stink too rankly. Yet there are offences against me which should weigh in your Majesty's eyes against what errors and follies I have committed."

The King was silent for a moment. "I know not what you mean in all this, my lord," he said sharply; "but I have a notion that you have exceeded the mistakes that may be forgiven mortal men. How shall justice be dealt to one and not to another? These poor men that you have misled are gone to death in one fashion or another, and you must ask to live on and be happy. I marvel at your assurance, my lord, as at your shamelessness."

"I misled none," cried Cherwell quickly, "and what chances of death were before others were before me, Sire."

"And what of judgment?" asked the King, with a sardonic smile.

"Your Majesty shall judge me," says my lord, bowing, and with dignity. "It is for that I am here."

"I am no Court of Justice," said Charles shortly; "I have other work for myself than to trouble with rebels."

"They call you, Sire," said my lord firmly, "the source of all justice and the fount of all honour."

"On the contrary," said the King, dryly. "That fancy went out with my father. I am dependent upon my subjects both for justice and for honour."

"I ask nothing but justice," says my lord, "but that

justice which will weigh all things and take account of what has lain secret and may be proffered to no Courts."

The King looked at him. "What influence has turned you to this course?" he asked in astonishment. "Is't for love of me, my lord?"

"Nay," said my lord boldly, "but yet it is for love."

The King rapped his knuckles impatiently on the arm of his chair. "Must ye learn, my lord, that 'tis not so difficult for one man to be taken in this country, even though he should be yourself? Why d'ye suppose you are at large, and unsecured, so that it is become a scandal in the Town? Think you the whole world is afraid of you? You have reached the limits of my mercy. My prerogative can go no further. I will hold justice back no longer. You have had your chance; nay, you have it still. The road lies open to you to Dover. But I tell you plain, my lord, that I can hold the hounds in leash no longer; no, and I desire not to do so, my lord."

My lord lifted his head higher and confronted his Majesty with spirit and animation.

"Then your Majesty has judged me," he said swiftly. "I am condemned of you."

The King made a gesture of impatience. "It were best you should go to your friends at the Hague," he said shortly.

"Listen, Sire," said Cherwell firmly. "It may be that you do not understand or cannot credit what are my wrongs. I will rehearse them for you. I had the honour to defend a poor child's innocence from those who were assailing it in treachery and by guile. Yet for this simple act I am involved in hostilities with princes, who should rather be protecting than persecuting, and to whom inno-

cence and helplessness should alike make appeal. Nay, more—this maid became my wife—wife to one derived of an honourable stock that served your Majesty's fathers, and shed blood in their behalf. Would you not suppose, Sire, that such a conspiracy against honour was not to be suffered, but that those who cruelly pursued the maiden should at least refrain when she had made choice? But it was not so, and my name was to be stained and my honour assoiled with her virgin heart, to glut this satyr of his passion. Your Majesty, if I stand condemned in my rashness and my folly, I stand also deeply wronged by his Highness. My offences are against your Majesty; my injuries are to him. I will desire and I will suffer no man's pity."

"My lord, you speak very glibly," said the King, "but indeed I desire no history of your wrongs. These annals are tedious. I have nought to do with my brother, and you admit that you have offended against me. I cannot intervene longer, but you shall have three days for your escape."

My lord now grew very angry, as was his wont, and his blood mounted in his head, and his eyes brightened. "Sire," he answered, "I have suffered greatly from your House, and I will have recompense. I will not go abroad at your Majesty's invitation. I will stay, rather, and demand justice."

"That ye shall have," says the King in a dry voice.

"Sire," said my lord, "you talk of justice, yet consider what it is that a king should exercise towards his subjects. You are placed here by a high decree of God, which some think inalienable. But should the Almighty revoke that fiat, what right or what order have ye? You are

but a blind instrument of His will, and must subject yourself thereto. If ye fail of that sovereign duty, ye abdicate from your great office, and lay by in that act your prerogative. You have the power of life and death, and to be an authority over all the commonweal. Them that lightly consider this office God shall not pardon or let go unrebuked. Your Majesty's father betrayed his obligations to his people, and to what cost to himself and the happiness of this realm! 'Twas drenched in blood, which flowed so thickly as to make a stream of guilt to be an example to all time. Sire, when the Court of Justice is shut in the face of the people they know not where they go, but run about blindly, each taking upon himself the burthen of avenger and exacting retribution. I am a leal subject of your Majesty's, and 'tis not against your Majesty that I have raised arms. Nay, but against one other who has evilly wronged me and those I love. Now stand I here before you, Sire, with this one plea and cry for justice ; and as I shall be judged, so also let him that is my enemy and my troubler be judged."

The King moved in his chair and put his hand above his eyes, as though to shadow them from the light.

"You ask me to believe that you are a loyal subject, my lord," he said. "Yet I find it hard to catch such a meaning out of these wild words. You are gone beyond yourself. But if this is, indeed, yourself that speaks, it is high time that we were done with the Earl of Cherwell."

My lord's eyes sparkled. "It is right," said he, "it is very meet and right that I should demand justice of you, and I ask you to judge between me and James Stewart."

"My lord!" cried the King in anger, rising from his chair.

“You shall hear me, Sire,” he cried, sworn with his passion. “I have put my injuries before you, and what do I receive? Why, there is a tale of what I have committed through these injuries and by hopes to cure them. There is no response made me on what I allege. You will not front the charges. This Duke will drag you down. What, think you, is spoken of him in the country, where he is abominated as one that will betray his people? Sire, they have an affection for you, these wayward people, but they hold his Highness in abhorrence, as I do, and they will exact of him, when he reigns in your Majesty’s place, that which he has owed them. They are a mild people, but they suffer sadly, keeping a remembrance of what they and their fathers have endured. So shall your Majesty discover, and that it is wiser to be loved than to be feared, and to be feared than to be hated. There is that in your House, Sire,” cried my lord, carried beyond himself, “which shall bring it to the earth. You betray your friends. There is none living among men who hath not tasted of that treachery, and none who does not regret that he had placed his trust in princes.”

“My lord,” cried the King in a fury, “you have spoken falsity and treason. Go.”

“I go,” said he, “yet I will break my sword before you. You shall do what you will,” and he snapped the blade across his knee and threw the pieces to the floor, turning to go without a reverence.

There was one about the Court from whom I heard many years later some account of these things. He it was that admitted my lord and remained in attendance within a closet near by. When my lord came forth, he looked neither to right nor to left, but marched swiftly towards the outer doors, and this other, astounded by what he had

heard, stood watching him. The King himself came next, as he told me, seeming to be deeply moved against his custom. He leaned on the courtier's arm, and looked after my lord.

"Nothing will tame that fellow," he said musingly. "There is no chance to break him. Yet it is needful that he have a lesson. He goes beyond all wildness," and then he added with a sigh, "Poor Tony!"

But my lord strode from Whitehall, until he was come to Charing Cross, where he entered in the "Boar," and asked for me. There I heard so much of this interview as he was able to render me in his agitation.

"I will not fly; I will stay," said he over and over again. "Let them do their worst."

So restless was he that when he had sate down to write an epistle to my lady he stood up a dozen times; and when he threw down the paper, he had got no further than a dozen sentences. He went out of the door into the street, and I followed, endeavouring to bring him to reason, and arguing upon what the King had said. I said that his Majesty wished him well, as all this proved, and that it were more prudent to yield to the storm for the time. But he repeated only that he was denied justice, and that the Duke was but one man like himself, whom he would spit upon his sword for a coward. And in this grievous state he had come, without perceiving it, into the lower parts of the Town.

The hour was very late, for he had been long with the King. Suddenly he came to a pause, considering me.

"What do you here, Hilary?" said he. "Go you to your bed. This is no place for you. You know not what I plot."

I remonstrated with him, urging him to come with me,

and protesting against so great a madness that would drive him maybe into an act of wickedness. But he flung me off and strode away, and I watched him pass down a narrow alley, where the light was faint. But in that instant of watching I beheld some figure that drew out of the blackness and came near him. Ere I was aware, this new shadow sprang forward, and there was an exclamation; and suddenly the scene dissolved into one that fled down the ill-lighted street, and one that lay upon the stones. Yet in that moment I had recognized the shadow that fled for that which I had seen in the courtyard of the "Bush" at Farnham.

I ran to my lord, and bent over him.

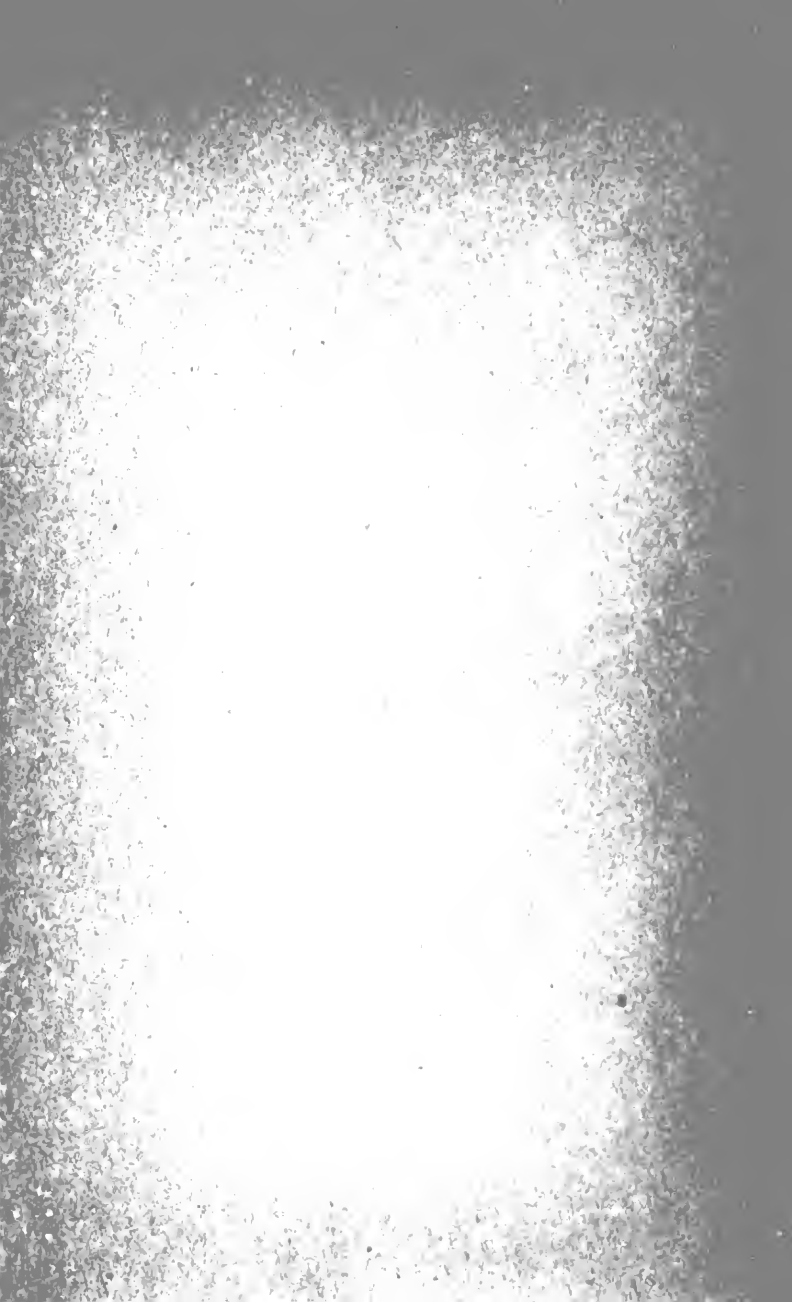
"Who is this?" he asked. "Is it thou, Hilary? I had thought——" and then he murmured. "The third time," and after that, "What I have done I have done," and with a little heaving of his breast was quiet.

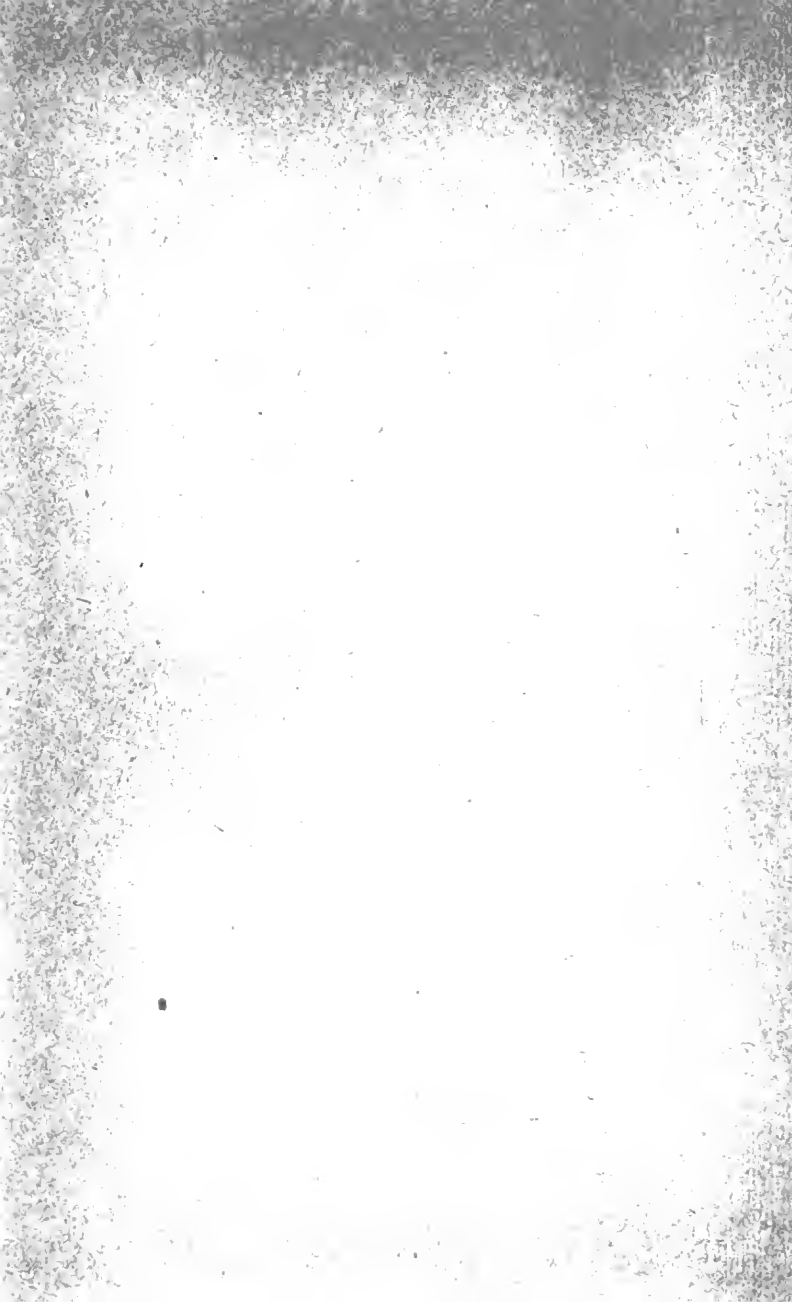
The letter which my lord had begun I took to my lady at Heriot Deane, but what it contained I never knew, for I sealed it without reading. The villain Fergus was hanged on the succeeding twentieth of July, keeping to the end a close silence as to what he knew. So died Anthony, the fourth Earl of Cherwell, in the thirty-first year of his age, on the ninth of June 1684. Anthony, the fifth Earl, who was the last of that House, was born in January 1685, at Heriot Deane, and was cut off untimely at the age of thirteen, in the year of his mother's death, Alethea, Countess of Cherwell.

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